Public Petitions Committee
Thursday 19 November 2026
6th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

PE2250: Introduce a nationwide knife amnesty

Introduction

Petitioner	Tracy Curdie
Petition Summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to call for a nationwide knife amnesty. 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.
Website	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2250

1. This is a new petition that was published on 26 August 2026.

2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.

3. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 227 signatures have been received on this petition.

4. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.

5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.

6. The Committee has received submissions from the Scottish Government and the Petitioner which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
November 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2250: Introduce a nationwide knife amnesty

Petitioner:

Tracy Curdie

Date Published:

26 August 2026

Petition summary:

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to call for a nationwide knife amnesty. 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.

Background information:

After a tragic death on Irvine beach last summer there was another knife attack in the town. Luckily it was not fatal, however one stabbing is enough - how many more could there be! After one mass shooting in the UK, gun laws changed for the better. Knife crime needs to be taken just as seriously. Parents are afraid and youths are unsafe. I do not understand why in a country with high rates of violence, especially knife crime, it has been two decades since the last knife amnesty and why there are no safety deposit knife bins, as there are in London. Such a policy change might save the lives of some Children.

Annexe B: SPICe Briefing

Scottish Parliament Information Centre
Ionad Fiosrachaidh Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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
- Youth Link Scotland

Frazer McCallum
Senior Researcher
12 October 2026

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.

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.

Annexe C: Written Submissions

PE2250/A: Introduce a nationwide knife amnesty

Scottish Government written submission, 7 October 2026

Does the Scottish Government consider the specific ask[s] of the petition to be practical or achievable? If not, please explain why.

There is absolutely no justification for carrying knives, or other weapons, at anytime – and we must be relentless in reinforcing that message to our young people. Scotland has experienced several tragic cases of youth violence, including knife crime deaths that deeply affect families and communities. While any violence is shocking and it is of course of cold comfort to victims and families, official data from a range of sources shows a long-term reduction in non-sexual violent crime.

In terms of the consequences of weapon possession, the long-term trend is of decline. Emergency hospital admissions due to assault with a sharp object fell 73% between 2008/09 and 2024/25 including a 83% reduction for those aged under 18, to a record low. Sharp instrument related homicides are also significantly lower over a similar period with 39% fewer cases during latest 5 years compared to 2005/06 - 2009/10. In addition, the proportion of adults in Scotland who thought knife carrying was common in their local area fell from 22% in 2008/09 to 14% by 2024/25.

However, in contrast, the total number of weapon-possession crimes recorded by the police has steadily grown since 2017/18 the earliest point this can be measured on a consistent basis – up 58% to 12,202 by 2025/26. Of the additional 4,469 weapon crimes recorded in 2025/26 compared to 2017/18 – less than a quarter 23% or 1,010) are cases involving bladed/pointed articles which we use as a ‘proxy’ for knives. This demonstrates that most of the headline growth is coming from other weapon types.

<u>Knife Amnesty Schemes: evidence and stakeholder views</u>

Scotland has never run a knife amnesty scheme as a freestanding measure. The 2006 amnesty, which collected 12,645 weapons through 220 bins, was one element of the year-long Safer Scotland campaign co-ordinated by the Violence Reduction Unit. This was embedded within a wider public-health approach, involving targeted campaigns for groups at particular risk – and this has been the approach taken since.

The Youth Endowment Fund’s research indicates that targeted work in locations where crime is most concentrated helps to understand the root causes and helps in designing and implementing tailored interventions to reduce crime. These approaches are likely to achieve greater impacts on violence and may improve relationships with community members.

Scottish Government has also worked with UK Home Office, Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, Police Scotland, Youth Link Scotland among others to understand what would be most effective in addressing knife crime.

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.

Potential weapons remain accessible in homes across Scotland in the form of household items. Surrendering a portion of these objects would not reduce the statistical risk of weapon-related assaults. Furthermore, empirical research demonstrates a replacement effect, whereby individuals' intent on carrying weapons are likely quickly replace surrendered items through retail or online channels. Weapon surrender schemes are primarily used by concerned parents, community members, or individuals who are desisting from offending. They fail to engage high-risk individuals for whom knife carrying is normalised through criminal involvement or fear.

Stakeholders have also pointed out that high-profile amnesty campaigns and publicly situated surrender bins can inadvertently increase public concern by creating a perception that knife carrying is pervasive. Research indicates that this heightened perception of risk can paradoxically encourage individuals to carry weapons for self-defence.

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.

What, if any, action is the Scottish Government currently taking to address the issues raised by this petition, and is any further action being considered that will achieve the ask[s] of this petition?

The Scottish Government is taking coordinated action to reduce violence through prevention, early intervention, community engagement and, where necessary, the criminal justice system. We recognise that effective prevention requires a long-term approach that addresses the underlying causes of violence while ensuring that those who commit criminal offences are held accountable through the law.

Medics Since 2023, the Scottish Government has invested over £8 million to support the delivery of the Violence Prevention Framework. This funding supports targeted activity in schools, hospitals and communities across Scotland, delivered through a range of violence prevention partners.

The Scottish Government has adopted a threefold approach to youth violence and, in particular, knife crime. First, we have education programmes on the danger and the unacceptability of carrying a knife and taking part in violence.

A range of programmes are delivered in schools and youth settings to help prevent youth violence and support vulnerable young people. For example, the No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) initiative, delivered by YouthLink Scotland, works with young people, schools and youth workers to raise awareness of the risks and consequences of carrying weapons while developing skills such as conflict resolution and positive decision-making. The programme is delivered locally across Scotland, including Glasgow, through schools, youth work and community partnerships, and has reached over 163,000 young people since its inception. In addition, more than 5,000 practitioners have been trained to deliver the programme. Alongside this, the Youth Navigators programme, delivered by Against Violence, supports young people aged 12 to 16 who arrive at Emergency Departments in distress, with over 600 young people having received support through the programme.

The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme, run by Education Scotland, is a school-based initiative delivered across Scotland, including Glasgow, that uses peer education and early intervention to help prevent violence, particularly gender-based violence. The programme trains senior pupils as mentors, who then lead sessions with younger students exploring issues such as bullying, harassment, coercive behaviour and violence. Using real-life scenarios, MVP helps young people understand and challenge the attitudes and social norms that can contribute to violence, while equipping them with the skills to intervene safely. The programme was delivered in over 200 schools across Scotland in the last year, with all 32 local authorities voluntarily engaging with it and 13 local authorities having now implemented it in every secondary school.

The Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) is our largest Violence Prevention partner and leads a public health approach to tackling violence. SVRU delivers a range of programmes by working with a number of local partners to design tailored and community led interventions that address specific drivers of youth violence. It focuses on preventing violence before it happens by addressing its root causes, such as trauma and inequality, and working in partnership with schools, communities and services. Through early intervention programmes, community-based initiatives and evidence-led approaches, the SVRU helps support young people, reduce risk factors and build safer communities across Scotland, including Glasgow.

In addition, there is effective punishment when offences are committed. The Young person’s sentencing guidelines make it clear all sentencing options, including imprisonment, remain open to the court. We support the use of custody where it is determined by independent judiciary. Just as we also support a justice system that believes in rehabilitation and that seeks to reduce reoffending. Offensive weapon laws are always kept under review, to help ensure the safety of communities. In 2016, the Scottish Government brought in new higher maximum penalties available to the court when dealing with anyone who is found guilty of having a knife or offensive weapon in a public place.

And thirdly, there is school and community engagement with young people to make sure that we create responsible citizens in Scotland – and most of Scotland’s young people are responsible citizens.

Is there any further information the Scottish Government wish to bring to the Committee's attention, which would assist it in considering this petition?

The Scottish Government currently provides funding to a number of education programmes on the danger an unacceptability of carrying a weapon. For example, the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme (run by Education Scotland), was delivered in over 200 schools across Scotland in the last year. All 32 local authorities are voluntarily engaging with the programme, and 13 local authorities have now implemented the programme in every secondary school.

Going forward, in 2026/27 SVRU will work with schools and other partners to deliver education and awareness on the impact of violence and carrying a weapon which is considered key in primary and secondary prevention. Combining a targeted approach with practitioner training and other awareness-raising activities will allow the conversation to change across the country, not just in the target areas as well as provide opportunities to identify and evaluate impact.

This will complement the continued national approach taken by No Knives Better Lives, which works in partnership with young people and multi-agency practitioners; including youth workers, police, teachers and social workers, to understand and address the underlying drivers of violence. Through its prevention and early intervention approach, NKBL works to create safer communities by supporting a culture where not carrying a knife is understood and reinforced as the norm. The programme is underpinned by a children's rights approach and aims to reduce weapon carrying and associated harms.

To date, over 163,000 young people have engaged with the programme and more than 5,000 practitioners have been trained. NKBL will continue to deliver practitioner training nationally, alongside e-learning, Communities of Practice and a wide range of practical resources and toolkits. This builds the confidence and capacity of the adults around young people to have informed, positive conversations about safety, risk and violence prevention, while supporting young people to make informed decisions and contribute to safer communities.

Safer Communities Division