



2nd Floor, 23 Hill St, St Helier, JE2 4UA

Scrutiny Office
States Greffe
Morier House
By email: a.harris5@gov.je

4th September 2020

Dear Rob,

Change to the Deployment of Tasers by the States of Jersey Police

Thank you for your letter requesting the views of the Authority in relation to your Panel's review of Proposition P.97/2020 – Deployment and use of Energy Conductive Devices (Taser's) by the States of Jersey Police (SoJP).

As you are well aware, the Assembly adopted P18/2014 "Tasers: Deployment & Use in Jersey by SoJP" on 1st April 2014 following an earlier Scrutiny review in 2012.

You have asked for our views on five specific matters and our response is detailed below. Our responses are based on information gained since 2014 when we were briefed on the operational need for Taser, together with evidenced based training and demonstrations provided to us by SoJP. As the statutory authority responsible for the efficiency and effectiveness of the States of Jersey Police, we have taken a keen interest in the use of Taser since its adoption and I am pleased to have an opportunity to provide you with what I believe are a firmly evidenced set of assurances regarding their use.

We are extremely lucky in Jersey to live in a safe and caring community and long may that remain so, but that does not mean that the Island is entirely free of serious incidents. The number of cases of people in mental health distress has been significant and often the police have to respond as the service of last resort.

It is extremely important that the public remain supportive of their policing service and that officers at all times appear approachable and helpful. It has been suggested to me that the deployment of officers in tactical equipment, wearing protective vests can be off-putting, but I have seen no evidence to support this. We have a responsibility on behalf of the public to ensure that police officers are provided with the best possible equipment and training in order for them to perform their duty which is to protect life, detect and deter crime. The deployment of Taser fits this category. It is a tool. A piece of equipment designed to protect life and extend the range of options open to an (appropriately trained) officer responding to an incident.



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The use of Taser as an instrument for policing

Currently Taser can only be deployed by a trained firearms officer under a fully sanctioned firearms authority given by a senior officer. It has huge value because it provides a 'less-lethal' alternative to the use of a firearm and can also be deployed at a safe distance from an individual. It is a significantly better option than the traditional alternatives which involve physical confrontation and restraint, the use of an irritant spray known as "PAVA", or a Baton that can inflict lasting physical injury. That having been said, the most important part of any officer's 'armoury' is their training and experience. Most Jersey firearms officers have not had to actually activate Taser, but where Taser has been used (and in this sense I mean unholstered and a person 'red dotted', it has had a significant deescalating effect. To my knowledge, the few occasions where the system has been fully used has been in cases where a person was in mental health crisis and did not respond to warnings. Use of Taser (including even the warning that it could be used) is always logged in a post incident report and body worn camera reviewed as evidence that proper procedures have been followed. For this reason, I believe that Taser is a valuable tool for public protection.

What constitutes responsible use of Taser and your understanding of the safeguards in place to ensure this is consistently applied

I have already referred to the training and guidelines followed by SoJP and these always govern the use of Taser. The most important safeguard for ensuring responsible use comes from officers' body worn camera which records the exact circumstances as they occur.

A Taser will only be deployed after the operator has undergone and passed the relevant training for use of the equipment. There are specific guidelines for when a Taser is an appropriate choice and these occasions are recorded after every incident.

The process, safeguards and training regarding Taser use and the understanding of how robust they are

At present Tasers can only be deployed by authorised firearms officers after appropriate training. This training is robust, but also covers situations which are thankfully extremely rare. After a review by the City of London Police in 2017 they recommended that Taser be allowed to be deployed outside of a firearms authority. This does not mean that Taser would be carried by all officers, or that its use would be uncontrolled. What it would mean is that after appropriate training, an officer could carry Taser as part of their own Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and that in the event of an incident occurring, they would be in a position to make a trained decision regarding its use. This has an important potential benefit in that if an officer is faced with a person threatening the public, or potentially themselves, they can save valuable time assessing and handling the situation because they



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will have the training and experience to deal with it themselves and would not necessarily have to radio for a firearms team to deploy, thus saving valuable time.

The situation thereafter would be the same. Officers must still follow official SoJP standard operating procedures (SOP) in compliance with the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP). Police Officers will only be issued with a Taser following relevant training. The use of a Taser by any Police Officer must always be justified and compliant with all existing legislation. I am confident that the policies and procedures in place will continue to provide the public with confidence that Taser, along with any other police response, is proportionate.

The potential impact of Taser on situations where they are significant concerns in relation to a person's mental wellbeing and how they are mitigated by Police Officers.

To the best of my knowledge, Taser has only been used in Jersey to protect people who are threatening to harm themselves or others and, to date, no complaints have been made. The individuals have been immediately detained for their own wellbeing (and those around them) and then transferred into medical care. Again, it is important not to forget that officers do not 'just deploy' Taser. They will always try and engage with vulnerable individuals to calm and deescalate a situation. Officers inform people that they have a Taser and that they are under threat if they do not comply with police, but in a situation that the person is unresponsive to the officers advice, Taser provides an important alternative to other forms of physical force.

It is hard to say what might have happened in those situations had Taser not been available for use, but I do think that it is sadly inevitable that someone would have taken their own life, or seriously injured themselves before an officer could have prevented it. In my view Taser has undoubtedly saved lives which would otherwise have been lost.

The potential impact of Taser on vulnerable individuals (including children and young people) and how it is mitigated by police officers.

The risk assessment made by the officer considering use of a Taser considers factors associated with protecting the safety of the individual or those around them. Whilst age and vulnerability will be considered, the level of threat to the individual or others will be the deciding factor.

As with guidelines associated with mental wellbeing of recipients of Taser usage, children/vulnerable individuals will be immediately transferred into the care of an appropriate professional. It is evident from recent interactions and incidents that children/vulnerable individuals are using violent behaviour (and often weapons) in engagement with Police Officers. It should therefore be remembered that Tasers are also



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deployed for the protection of Police Officers going about their duty. In this sense, where a person has the mental capacity to understand the lawful order given by an officer, but has chosen not to comply, the threat of Taser (after proper warnings) has been effective in preventing further violence.

In addition to the information above, I note that there is a demonstration on the use of Taser being held on 15th October to which all States members are invited to attend prior to the debate in the States Assembly on 20th October. Members of the Police Authority will also be in attendance and I urge you to encourage all the members of the Panel to attend.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jason Lane
Chair, Jersey Police Authority