

PAULINE McNEILL MSP CALLS FOR MINIMUM SENTENCES FOR KNIFE CRIMINALS

Last year in Strathclyde there were 5,688 knife crimes recorded

Pauline McNeill MSP has today (20th May 2009) called for a minimum sentence for knife crime, including jail time for knife carriers.

The proposal would mean that anyone caught either carrying a knife or perpetrating an attack with a weapon would automatically get a jail sentence. (1)

Labour's proposals would give sentencers the ability to give jail terms of up to five years in the Sheriff Court.

This measure forms part of a package of measures that Labour will be bringing forward to tackle the devastating impact knife crime continues to have on all too many communities across Scotland.

Last year alone Strathclyde Police recorded some 5,688 crimes of 'handling an offensive weapon'. (2)

In the same period, across Scotland 55 people were killed using a sharp instrument. That figure which accounts almost half (48%) of all murders in 2007/08. (3)

Speaking today, Pauline McNeill MSP said:

"Official Government figures show that in the Strathclyde area police recorded a staggering 5,688 crimes involving an offensive weapon. It is clear more needs to be done to rid the streets of Glasgow of lethal knives.

"Communities in Glasgow know the damage knives can cause. The message is simple. Carry a knife and go to jail.

"Across Scotland last year 55 people were murdered with knives and 1,170 people were admitted to hospital with knife wounds. These are not just statistics but real people and that's why Labour is pushing forward tough proposals to make it clear that carrying a knife is not acceptable.

"The fact is of the near 3,500 people convicted of weapons offences less than 1,000 went to prison. To get the change that we need in behaviour then it needs to be clear that carry a knife means prison."

"We need a change in sentencing policy to try to change the culture of carrying a knife. If you carry a knife you have committed the crime and you will get time."

ENDS

NOTES

1. Under Labour's proposals it would mean that anyone convicted of knife carrying would receive a prison sentence. Sheriffs and Judges would still retain discretion in exceptional circumstances and would be able to suspend a sentence.

2. In 2007/08 Strathclyde Police recorded 5,688 crimes of 'handling an offensive weapon'.

Number of crimes of 'handling an offensive weapon' recorded in 2007/08, broken down by police force:

Central (385)
Dumfries & Galloway (133)
Fife (314)
Grampian (586)
Lothian & Borders (1,186)
Northern (377)
Strathclyde (5,688)
Tayside (320)
SCOTLAND (8,989)

Extracted from: Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2007/08, Table 4a Crimes and offences recorded by police force area, 2007/08. For further details see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/29155946/10>

3. In 2007/08 across Scotland, 55 people were killed using a sharp instrument. That figure which accounts almost half (48%) of all killings in that year. For further details see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/15155727/5>