

Taser training for 500 officers will start at the end of May



The training of around 500 Specially Trained Officers (STOs) in the use of Conducted Energy Devices (Taser) will begin at the end of May 2018, with the first officers expected to return to their local communities in early June 2018.

Police Scotland announced plans in December 2017 to train additional officers who will be equipped with Taser in a move to improve the safety of the public and police officers, following an increase in the number of incidents in which officers have been confronted by people with bladed weapons and an increase in assaults on officers.

Once trained, the STOs will be equipped with the Taser X2 and will be deployed across communities throughout Scotland, in both urban and rural areas.

The total number of STOs will equate to just under 3% of the force establishment and brings Police Scotland into line with

forces throughout the UK.

Police Scotland has been carrying out an extensive programme of engagement with national and local politicians and other key stakeholders to explain the plan to increase the deployment of Taser (correctly known as Conductive Energy Devices) before the STOs are in place.

Chief Superintendent Matt Richards said, "Our priority at all times is the safety of the public and the safety of our officers who are attending incidents, often not knowing what they'll face. Due to the increasing number of incidents officers are attending where people are armed with bladed weapons and the growing number of assaults on police officers, it is necessary for us to take steps to improve our ability to keep the public and officers safe.

"The officers will be fully trained in the use and safe keeping of the Taser and there will also be a focus on dealing with vulnerable people and identifying risks to ensure that the deployment of Taser is proportionate and safe.

"These officers will be deployed at the heart of local policing in all 13 divisions across Scotland, helping to keep their colleagues and the public safe and bringing Police Scotland into line with forces throughout the UK.

"Ultimately, our focus remains on keeping people safe, which is at the heart of what we do.

"As well as engaging with a number of stakeholders including elected representatives, the Scottish Government, Scottish Police Federation, Scottish Police Authority, PIRC, HMICS and charity groups, we have been working with the NHS and Violence Reduction Unit to share best practice and improve de-escalation techniques."

Calum Steele from the Scottish Police Federation said, "Police officers are attending incidents where they face increased

violence, and individuals armed with weapons on a daily basis. They are subjected to assaults and regularly suffer injuries, some of which can be life changing and career ending.

“It is vital that officers have the necessary equipment and training so they can keep the public, and themselves, safe when responding to these incidents.

“A survey of our members showed overwhelming support for the provision of additional protective equipment and the training programme that will start shortly is a welcome step in the right direction.”

Taser allows officers to maintain a safer distance from a subject, decreases the risk of injury, prevents escalation and enables safer and quicker resolution to an incident.

Every time a Taser is discharged, a report is sent to the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner to independently assess the incident.