

I saw the media article requesting public views on tasers and I thought I would get in touch.

My partner is a response police officer and is likely to be one of the first officers to be equipped with a taser should this law pass. In all honestly it would be a massive relief to me to know he carries a taser. This is for the following reasons:

- 1) he is single crewed and gets sent to domestic abuse, public order and mental health situations every shift he works. He frequently has to deal with people using knives and has on several occasions been attacked with a knife. He's lucky not to have been stabbed. He willingly goes to these jobs but is more and more regularly told that there isn't back up so he's alone in these situations trying his best to de-escalate them but with only minimal PPE.
- 2) The current PPE carried by response police officers (not including the firearms officers) includes pava spray which isn't effective for everyone and is also likely to incapacitate my partner if he uses it. Nothing like being blinded yourself while trying to wrestle someone who's blind, now irate and wielding a knife! The police baton is also in his PPE kit but requires him to get close to someone with a knife and he has to hit them hard to make sure he incapacitates them before they stab him. The baton causes some lasting damage to people and has the potential to be taken from him and used against him. Both pava and the baton require him to get in close to any assailant which increases the likelihood of him being harmed.
- 3) there's increasing numbers of calls for concern for welfare. These people shouldn't be hit with a baton, sprayed with pava or need a police officer to wrestle them to remove whatever it is they wish to kill themselves with. However, I'm sure it's 100% more acceptable to taser someone than watch them kill themselves in front of you. The number of mental health incidents my partner has attended which still haunt him is too many to count.
- 4) the arguments for why a police officer shouldn't carry a taser which are currently circulating in society are offensive. These officers will have to pass a nationally accredited course before they are trusted with this piece of kit, receive regular training and have to be re-certified in the use of it every year. We let members of the public get behind the wheel of a car every day without requiring as much regular training and testing and a car is far more dangerous!
- 5) a taser doesn't leave any lasting damage, so unlike the baton which can break ribs and other bones, a dog bite which can leave scarring and a firearm which is likely to be fatal - the taser is a better option for officers who need to quickly de-escalate a situation and prevent an individual from harming themselves or others.
- 6) I would invite any politician or member of the public to accompany a police officer into some of the very dangerous situations they face daily. Maybe watch some of the body-worn footage from police forces where tasers have been successfully used, or where police officers have been hurt because they didn't have one. Maybe ask the female cop who was assaulted locally on New Years eve last year when she attended a domestic as a single crewed officer, had to call for back up and didn't get any before she was assaulted because officers were all dealing with other incidents whether she would be feeling better if she'd had a taser.
- 7) I worry every time my partner goes to work that something might happen to him. He puts himself in danger every day to help the public. It's a thankless task. Most of the people he gets sent to deal with don't want him there and often they show him that aggressively. If you don't

want to give police officers tasers, then you should consider the policy for single crewing over here, increase police officer numbers and see whether that makes financial sense. Is that cheaper in the long run than having to deal with the repercussions of a police officer being fatally attacked over here? Maybe you should consider bringing in Andrew's law - the law being fought for by the widow of PC Andrew Harper in the UK. I don't want to be in the position that she's found herself in, I don't think anyone would. But it just takes one incident in the many hundreds that a police officer attends every year to turn sour and it would be a whole lot less likely if they were equipped with a taser.