

Planned Voluntary Interview Pathway Information Sheet

Police Scotland and CYCJ

Background:

As part of Police Scotland's Criminal Justice Improvement Programme, Police Scotland reintroduced the investigative option for officers to conduct voluntary interviews of individuals out with the custody environment.

It was recognised that the practice of arresting someone, including children and young people, where an interview is deemed necessary to the investigation, and taking them to a Police Custody Centre to be fully processed and interviewed, could at times be seen as disproportionate when considering the offence committed.

The Pathway complements the re-launch of Police Direct Measures with a focus on 'Alternatives to Prosecution' with a direction to Police Officers to consider Direct Measures at the conclusion of any voluntary interview carried out. Reducing the pressure on Courts and the requirement for victims of crime from being cited to attend court to provide evidence.

The aim of the Planned Voluntary Interview Pathway (PVIP) is to create alternative options to conduct Police Interviews based on the presumption of liberty, ensuring that all arrests are lawful, necessary and proportionate. Moreover, in terms of minor offences, there is also a requirement at the outset to ensure that a human rights and a trauma informed approach is adopted, with recognition that the Police Custody process can be an overwhelming and traumatic experience for some individuals, in particular children and young people and those with vulnerabilities (Vaswani, 2024).

This investigative option allows officers to assess if the crime they are investigating meets the criteria as set out in the National Guidance as being suitable for investigation using the Pathway. The ethos being that officers will be able to conduct pre-planned voluntary interviews of individuals for low level /minor offending within a defined room of an approved police station across Scotland.

In this respect 130 Police Stations across the Police Scotland Force area were found to be suitable for use on the Pathway reducing travelling times to Police Custody Centres for both Police Officers and those subject to the Voluntary Police Interview.

Current Position:

Following a successful pilot period the Pathway was rolled out across Police Scotland on 2nd December 2024 with the initial results being extremely positive from both Police Officers and Criminal Justice Partners. Feedback from officer's highlighted that the pathway was easy to use, convenient, time saving and effective to complete enquiries.

The pathway has now been live nationally for 11 months (Oct 2025). In this time, there have been 3257 interviews conducted on the pathway.

Using the pathway for children and young people reduces the trauma many experience by being in police custody (Vaswani, 2024) and meets their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Next Steps:

We want to promote and encourage the use of PVIP for all individuals, but especially children and young people where appropriate, to reduce trauma and ensure their rights are upheld under UNCRC. To do this, Police Scotland will continue to promote and encourage the use of PVIP to enquiry officers and Criminal Justice staff, to use this method of interview when relevant. Promoting the use of the PVIP will reduce time spent in custody centres, enhance our response to trauma informed policing, and release efficiencies throughout the Criminal Justice pathways. To do this we will continue a program of education between Custody officers and local policing into the use of PVIP, capture missed opportunities and highlight the many operational benefits released by the use of PVIP.