

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

POLICE USE OF TASER IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Taser has been available to all Authorised Firearms Officers since September 2004 as a less lethal alternative for use in situations where a firearms authority has been granted in accordance with criteria laid down in the Association of Chief Police Officers Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms.

I am giving my approval from 20 July 2007 for Chief Officers throughout England and Wales to deploy Taser for use by Authorised Firearms Officers in operations or incidents where the criteria for the authorisation to issue firearms does not apply, but where officers are facing violence or threats of violence of such severity that they would need to use force to protect the public, themselves and/or the subject(s) of their action.

I am also approving a 12 month trial of the deployment of Taser by specially trained units who are not firearms officers in similarly violent circumstances requiring conflict management. The trial, commencing on 1 September 2007, will be undertaken in the following 10 forces: Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Gwent, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Metropolitan Police Service, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, North Wales and West Yorkshire.

ACPO has produced new policy and operational guidance documents for both the extension and the trial. The Defence Scientific Advisory Council (DSAC) Sub Committee on the Medical Implications of Less Lethal Weapons (DOMILL) was invited to provide a fourth statement on the medical implications of the use of Taser taking into account the new ACPO policy and guidance. The DOMILL statement confirms that the risk of death or serious injury from Taser remains low.

All Taser deployments will continue to be monitored and a detailed report of every deployment will be produced. These reports will be collated by the Home Office Scientific Development Branch and summarised on a three-monthly basis for assessment by DOMILL.

I have placed a copy of the DOMILL statement in the Library of the House.