

LIBERTY

PROTECTING CIVIL LIBERTIES
PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS

Summary of substantive policy discussions **at Liberty Council meeting** **March 2017**

The Policy Assistant gave an overview of the law and policy relating to the use of Tasers by police in the UK. He sought Council's views on Policy's preliminary recommendations for our objectives in this area.

Council discussed several issues of serious concern in respect of Taser use by police, including the following areas in which questions were raised:

- the different modes of use of Tasers and the risks posed by Tasers within and without the guidelines;
- the risk of 'mission creep' and a 'Taser effect' generating a massive expansion in the circumstances of use;
- the need to consider whether pursuing Taser International's dubious business practices was worthwhile, and whether it amounted to a distraction from the core issues;
- the use of Tasers against those with mental illness and mental disabilities, and in psychiatric institutions;
- the regulation of Tasers as firearms, and their use by firearms officers;
- the political case likely to be made for Taser use by officers after attacks such as that in Westminster;
- consideration to the bringing of litigation against individual uses of Tasers and judicial review of the guidelines, with questions raised as to the role of strategic litigation in this and related fields;

Council expressed its serious concern as to the lack of proper regulation of Tasers, the risks brought by their use, and the need for strong safeguards. It considered that the restriction of their use by firearms officers in situations in which serious harm is immediately or imminently threatened, where otherwise a gun may be discharged, is an important goal.

Whilst it expressed serious concern as to the use of Tasers in drive-stun mode, it left open the question of whether this mode should be banned in all circumstances. It concluded that at the very least very stringent safeguards must be placed on the use of the devices in this manner.