



Standing Committee for Youth Justice

**SCYJ response, October 2018:  
Home Office consultation on police 'stop and search' powers**

**To what extent to do agree with the following statements  
(Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)**

**1. "A new power of stop and search is required to allow police officers to prevent the proposed offence of possession of a corrosive substance in a public place".**

Disagree

**2. "The proposed new power of stop and search is a proportionate response to the threat posed by the possession of a corrosive substance in a public place".**

Disagree

**3. "The proposed new power will be effective in operation in relation to corrosive substances".**

Strongly Disagree

**4. Do you have any other comments regarding the proposed new powers (on Drones, Lasers or Corrosive Substances)? 200 word limit**

The Offensive Weapons Bill corrosive substance possession offence defines 'corrosive substances' only as 'capable of burning human skin by corrosion'. The proposed changes would therefore allow police to stop and search if they had 'reasonable grounds' for thinking someone was carrying such substances, which includes many household cleaning products. Police could legally stop and search anybody carrying shopping bags, for example, 'reasonably believing' such products are contained.

This expansion of largely untargeted stop and searches risks increasing the number of children in the formal CJS – yet evidence shows diversion is key<sup>i</sup> – and cannot be justified on the grounds of effectiveness: there is no evidence the power impacts levels of violent crime.<sup>ii</sup>

Boys and young men are already disproportionately targeted by stop and searches.<sup>iii</sup> The extremely broad 'reasonable grounds' for stop and searches will likely increase the level of harassment young black boys feel they face from police,<sup>iv</sup> discriminating and further damaging trust in police and the justice system.<sup>v</sup> This will be accentuated by the lack of clarity in the ill-defined offence that, without requiring intent to cause harm, will lead to overcharging, unjust prosecutions and imprisonments,<sup>vi</sup> fuelling disproportionality in the CJS.





## Standing Committee for Youth Justice

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<sup>i</sup> <https://campbellcollaboration.org/library/police-initiated-diversion-to-prevent-future-delinquent-behaviour.html>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/bjc/article-abstract/58/5/1212/4827589>;

[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/ehrc\\_stop\\_and\\_search\\_report.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/ehrc_stop_and_search_report.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/stop-and-search-dashboard/>

<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.stop-watch.org/uploads/documents/Being\\_Matrixed.pdf](http://www.stop-watch.org/uploads/documents/Being_Matrixed.pdf);

<http://criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/No-Respect-290617-1.pdf>;

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest>

<sup>v</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> <http://scyj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FINAL-SCYJ-Offensive-Weapons-Bill-evidence-submission.pdf>

