

“ **PPP** ”

People for Proper Policing in North Wales

Police criticised over 'routine' use of Taser stun guns

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Police chiefs were criticised yesterday for using Taser stun guns to handle routine public order situations involving **people under the influence of alcohol, and the mentally ill**.

An official report on the use of "**less-lethal weapons**" since the wider use of Tasers was approved last year has revealed that the vast majority of incidents involved individuals with drink, drugs or psychological problems.

The report shows that, in the **four months after ministers extended situations in which Tasers** – which deliver a 50,000-volt shock to victims, temporarily immobilising them – could be used, officers in England and Wales **drew the weapons 390 times and fired them in one in three incidents**. Of the 390 incidents, 150 involved cases of "drunkenness" and 150 related to people suffering from "psychological problems or mental illness". A further 60 cases involved people under the influence of drugs, while 20 more had significant health problems. Four of the people involved were under 18.

The former home secretary **David Blunkett** allowed police chiefs in England and Wales in 2004 to issue Tasers to authorised firearms officers. Ministers have since increased the numbers of officers authorised to use them "**where facing violence or threats of violence**". **Rates of deployment have risen from around 25 a month to almost 100**.

Shami Chakrabati, director of the human rights group **Liberty**, said yesterday : "*We have always been sold Tasers on the basis that, in extreme circumstances, they would be safer than firearms. If they are being used for routine convenience, then our worst fears about encouraging trigger-happy policing would be realised.*"

A Home Office spokeswoman said: "*The extension of Taser was limited to incidents where officers are facing threats of serious violence. The use of Taser has been successful in resolving incidents which could otherwise have resulted in serious injury to the public or police officers.*"

The PPP comments ... we are not pleased to say *we told you so* but it was expected and will get progressively worse. We need to be vigilant! To avoid an escalation of inappropriate use of these devices. Sense and reason in all things are the PPPs watch words.