



ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS IN SCOTLAND

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **SCOTLAND'S POLICE CHIEFS WELCOME LEGISLATION TO CLARIFY DEALING WITH SEXUAL OFFENCES**

SCOTLAND's chief police officers are pleased to see the Government's new bill regarding sexual offences clarify a number of complex and sensitive issues for the public as well as professionals working in the criminal justice arena.

Deputy Chief Constable Tom Halpin, (Lothian and Borders Police), who holds the Family Protection Portfolio for the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), said:

"We particularly welcome reform in addressing previous disparity in terms of gender specific sexual offences, such as rape. The proposal to bring the law up-to-date in this area, giving equal status to men and women, boys and girls, as well as clarity to issues around consent, is a positive amendment to existing legislative provision."

The police in Scotland will continue to work together with partner agencies to ensure that the best possible service is provided for those who are affected by circumstances covered in this legislation.

"We agree with the proposal that investigations into any reports of underage sexual activity with older children should focus on the nature of the relationship between both parties, and careful consideration of any vulnerabilities identified through sharing information with partner agencies," Mr. Halpin explained.

"We will also continue to support any future guidance in this challenging area, taking cognisance of the wider social interests involved in finding a balance in the protection of potentially vulnerable children and young people with improvements in sexual health awareness.

"As well as the Bill giving a clear opportunity in reforming the law, we fully appreciate the need and are committed to continuing to improve our own services to victims and their families in providing support as well as further professionalising the investigation process," DCC Halpin concluded.

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For further information, contact : Graham MacDonell,  
ACPOS Communications: 0141 435 1241 or 07771 842 881 (out of hours)