

Justice Secretary reflects on stop and search

Writing in the Scotsman this week, Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf reflected on the use of stop and search and how improved guidance for police has introduced a better balance between individual rights and allowing the police to continue to address crime in all its aspects.

One of the key challenges for any government minister is understanding how the impact of your policies is felt by people in their day-to-day lives. Actions have consequences, sometimes unintended ones, and getting the balance right is tricky. As a politician, my job is to see it from both sides by meeting, talking and listening to people.

But in the case of police powers to stop and search, I have first-hand experience of the impact on people.

As a young Asian man growing up in Glasgow I've been stopped and searched around a dozen times, sometimes at the airport, but when I was younger in the street or in my car or a friend's car.

That was quite a few years ago now. Today I am in the privileged position of Justice Secretary and in a position to ensure the police have the tools to do their day job and civil liberties are protected.

Stop and search has an important place in terms of tackling, indeed preventing, crime and protecting the public. It is right that the police, who work day and night to keep our communities safe, have these powers.

But I know that I wasn't alone in being concerned about some of the practices around stop and search.

It is vital there is a balance between, on the one hand, allowing the police to continue to address crime in all its aspects, and, on the other, the right of the public, including our young people, to go about their daily lives untroubled by unjustified police activity.

As a parliament and as a country we have been having this very debate over the last few years and this government has responded by putting in place the checks and balances needed.

We introduced a statutory code of practice in 2017 to ensure that stop and search is used legally and proportionately and that

searches are carried out with fairness and respect, including specific guidance on searching children and vulnerable adults.