

The Street Weapons Commission

Scott Breslin

Commissioner

Scott Breslin, welcome.

Scott Breslin

It is.

Commissioner

If I may... and you'll forgive me if I give a short introduction. We have looked at the whole problem of knife crime and young people in a number of cities, we've got 1 more to go to I think and here we are in Glasgow today and it's very easy in an academic sense almost to forget what happens to the victim and you're here, in a very stark way, representing the victim's point of view and if you'll bear with me, very quickly, 7 years ago when you were 16, living in Pennilee, a suburb of Glasgow, with no history of trouble with the authorities at all, living a perfectly normal and very upright life, found yourself on the street and quite at random, stabbed by 2 young men. They seized you, they stabbed you in the neck and ran off and left you permanently, for life, paralysed from the neck down.

Scott Breslin

Yes.

Commissioner

They, I suppose one would say, in a sense, have paid the price. They were sentenced individually to 10 and 4 ½ years in prison, served ½ of that I guess and they're both out and here are you today, confined to a wheelchair for life and, if I may so, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, we're very grateful to you for the courage you're displaying in coming to talk to us today, on camera.

Scott Breslin

That's no problem.

Commissioner

Thank you very much indeed. It's trite, isn't it to say well, you know, what is your perspective of this, because you didn't deserve it, you got it and here you are.

Scott Breslin

In general or would you mean knife crime epidemic?

Commissioner

Well, let us start off with your experience and how you're seeing life today, in general terms?

Scott Breslin

Well in general terms, it's totally different to what I would be doing if I was up and about. I've had my total independence taken away from me. I totally rely on everybody to do simple tasks as like give me a drink or itch my nose or basically just get up in the morning, but basically it takes me 2 ½ hours prior to whatever time I need to get up to actually start getting up, due to that I need 24 hour care and assistance.

Commissioner

...and the impact is on those around you as well of course. It's a huge impact on you of course.

Scott Breslin

It's impact on myself and my family...

Commissioner

Yeah.

Scott Breslin

...because like, my Father especially, I'm his only Son so I was out there to like carry on his legacy of that and the family line and the odds of that happening is pretty slim now.

Commissioner

...and forgive me for asking but there's no real question of huge compensation because I get these 2 young men have got no money so you didn't sue them or couldn't sue them.

Scott Breslin

No.

Commissioner

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, not a lot I guess?

Scott Breslin

Still nothing from them.

Commissioner

So there you are on your own, with your family on your own and not a lot of money to support the condition you're in now.

Scott Breslin

No. Look, I'm pretty much living on the poverty line, living on benefits. I'm at College now trying to do something with myself and get back into work and

stuff like that.

Commissioner

Yes. How are you trying to build your life in the situation. Is there anything you can do at all?

Scott Breslin

Well it depends what you mean, like I've still, I've got full mental capacity.

Commissioner

With the benefit of computers for example, you know, painting and so on, so...

Scott Breslin

Yes.

Commissioner

Very limited I know.

Scott Breslin

Well basically I'm in the process of trying to get adaptive technology to be able to work my computer and stuff like that through your voice or head movements.

Commissioner

Mm and is that beginning to bear fruit?

Scott Breslin

What's that sorry?

Commissioner

Are you beginning to score on that account?

Scott Breslin

Well, I'm trying to sort out the adaptive technology, I haven't actually got the technology yet. I'm actually getting this through a charitable donation from... I'm not actually even sure who it's coming from but a previous carer went to Switzerland and she was offered this charitable donation to give to who she wants and she chose me and it has to be used in adaptive technology

Commissioner

Yeah.

Scott Breslin

...and that's the road that I'm pursuing.

Commissioner

I know my colleagues wanted to come in as well and I'll stand back. Mind you, there's other things that I'd like to talk to you about later on.

Commissioner

Yeah Scott... I know we're in Scotland and the Law is different here but I don't think it's probably dramatically different from the situation in England and Wales where victims have tended, historically, to be rather neglected and forgotten. I think people have tried to do a bit more about that in recent years and to get the victim's voice involved in that. I know that you're very keen to assist what you call a strengthening of victim's rights and I wondered if you'd say a bit more about the detail of what you mean by that?

Scott Breslin

What d'you mean? Like I'd just like to put my voice and opinion across, not just for myself, like, if I can convince 1 person not to carry a knife or commit an offence, a violent attack, then I'm happy that I'm doing something out there, just trying to change people's perspectives.

Commissioner

How did you feel about the... maybe this is a difficult question, but the prison sentences that were passed on the...?

Scott Breslin

That's probably the thing that I'm most disgusted at. The prison sentences are just... I don't see the point in sentencing somebody to 10 years when they're gonna do 5. Why not just say you're doing 5. They try and make the judicial system... try to make it sound like they're doing more for you when in fact they're gonna let them out in ½ their time. When every prisoner goes in, practically knows that their time's gonna be halved so, is there a point to it?

Commissioner

...and how best d'you think you might be able to deter, dissuade young people and other people from carrying knives.

Scott Breslin

Well it depends, if somebody's carrying a knife then I would probably say it's too late for them, there's no way I'd be able to change their minds. You need to get people earlier because I believe that our education or lack of education more so, has got to do with it. If they aren't getting properly educated in the house at what's right and what's wrong, they need to get it somewhere else, in school. I think the schools are failing a lot in that.

Commissioner

Sure. Well just last one, if young people or others are caught carrying weapons, something that can be defined as a weapon, not just knives but specifically knives, would you advocate much tougher custodial sentences for that kind of offence?

Scott Breslin

Yes, if somebody's got a knife in their hand, then they've got the potential to use it. Whether they think they're carrying it for their own protection or not, which I hear as an excuse all the time, if nobody's carrying knives, nobody would need to carry knives.

Commissioner

Okay, thank you.

Commissioner

Yes.

Commissioner

Have you Scott, have you met with your... or have you seen your attackers since they've been released?

Scott Breslin

No, I've had no interest at all. I get asked did I want to receive a letter when they were released from prison, but I didn't really think there... there was no benefit to me and now they're not, they were only a part of my life, in 1 night, that changed my life dramatically but as of them having any effect on my life now, I would rather just not know.

Commissioner

Did they belong to the same community as yourself?

Scott Breslin

No, I'd never met them before, I'd never heard of them.

Commissioner

They didn't live in the same area?

Scott Breslin

No, they lived... I'm from just at the borderline of Glasgow, in Paisley and I think they were kinda close to the City Centre, right about Govan area but probably [INAUDIBLE].

Commissioner

Have you any way of telling the effect that your condition, the fact that you're now paralysed as a result of this crime, has had?

Scott Breslin

Emotionally and mentally?

Commissioner

Mm.

Scott Breslin

Well of course, at the start I had like my down periods but I'm just trying to better my life and deal with it as best I can, with getting out and living as close to a normal life which I can.

Commissioner

You were talking about, like the sentencing...

Scott Breslin

Yeah.

Commissioner

...and I just wondered if you had any thoughts on... you said tougher sentences.

Scott Breslin

Not tougher sentences, just serve their whole sentence.

Commissioner

Yeah but what would you consider they do, you know, what would you think that we should do with people while they're in there? You said tougher

Scott Breslin

What d'you mean, like longer sentences?

Commissioner

Yeah, like what d'you think should happen to them, like, while they're doing it?

Scott Breslin

Well, for the starters, like, there needs to be jails built because obviously they aren't big enough to hold the amount of people that are actually getting caught. That's due to the fact why people are getting released, sometimes in less than ½ their sentences, so if they build more jails, make more spaces, then they can have more time to actually spend in rehabilitating the offenders, if that's even possible.

Commissioner

Right.

Commissioner

Scott, we're very grateful to you for coming. I know from the brief that we've got that you're studying well maybe beginning to study for an HMD in Media and Communications...

Scott Breslin

Yes.

Commissioner

...and you already talked to us about the computer that you're looking for and I know you've got plans to take a degree and then move into some role in Media.

Scott Breslin

Yes, yes.

Commissioner

...and if I may make a plug on behalf of my colleagues towards Channel 4, you know I rather hope that they may be 1 of several media outlets you would be seeking to give you a change in employment there.

Scott Breslin

That would be a bit help.

Commissioner

Thank you for coming, it's a salutary experience, I do wish you well but particularly our thanks for coming here today. Thank you very much.

Scott Breslin

Oh, it's a pleasure. Pleased to meet you's all.

Commissioner

Cheers.

CHATTER [CLAPPING]

Scott Breslin

Thanks a lot.

CHATTER

Commissioner

I wanted to ask if he does a lot of talks and stuff with other agencies.

Commissioner

...and I was gonna ask him that actually, especially schools.

Commissioner

[INAUDIBLE] that's one of the only ones I [INAUDIBLE].

Commissioner

Yeah.

Commissioner

It's a good one for restoratory justice, I think.

Commissioner

But he doesn't particularly have no time for [TALKING OVER EACH OTHER].

Commissioner

Do you?

Commissioner

Restorative justice?

Commissioner

Yeah.

Commissioner

Yes I do, I think at a communal level, it could be pretty salutary.

Commissioner

[INAUDIBLE] South Africa a lot.

Commissioner

Mm.

Commissioner

They're actually quite... they do quite a lot of it there.

CHATTER

CUT