# Scottish communities demand criminalisation of non-consensual photography of children amid rising safety fears



Concerns surrounding the safety and rights of children in public spaces have intensified, prompting calls for significant legislative changes regarding non-consensual photography of minors in Scotland. Recent reports have surfaced of suspicious behaviour at parks, with adults allegedly photographing children without parental consent. This has alarmed local communities, leading to demands from officials for stricter laws to safeguard children’s privacy.

A prominent voice in this debate is Jamie McGuire, a Scottish Labour councillor representing Renfrew North and Braehead. He has called for the act of photographing children without consent to be classified as a criminal offence, highlighting incidents reported at Robertson Park in Renfrew. "One of the most disturbing reports is that individuals have been taking photographs of children in the park," McGuire emphasised in statements to the Scottish Daily Express, categorising this behaviour as “completely unacceptable”. He reinforced the necessity for increased police presence in the park, stating that families must feel secure while their children play.

This call for heightened attention is timely, given similar concerns raised across various regions in Scotland, including Drumchapel and Edinburgh. Community discussions have erupted on social media platforms, raising the alarm over reported incidents of adults behaving aggressively toward children while seeking to photograph them. McGuire's statements came as Police Scotland confirmed they had increased their patrols in response to these reports. Notably, recent charges were brought against two men in Paisley for a "breach of the peace" related to troubling incidents at Barshaw Park.

The issue of children’s privacy in public spaces has gained further urgency with the launch of a petition aimed at the Scottish government, demanding that non-consensual photography of children be illegal. This initiative, supported by advocates and concerned citizens alike, cites alarming statistics from a 2018 University of Cambridge analysis, which revealed that children under 13 are often victims of privacy violations owing to the lack of comprehensive legal protection.

Further incidents outside of parks have contributed to this growing unease. A mother recently expressed her horror after men were found taking secret photographs of her daughter while they were shopping at Glasgow’s Buchanan Galleries. When confronted, the men deleted the images, but the mother was distressed to learn from police that their actions did not constitute a criminal act. This incident has ignited renewed discussions about the need for legal reforms to protect children’s rights to privacy in public.

The statistics supporting the urgency of these reforms are sobering. Over the past five years, Police Scotland has recorded more than 3,000 offences related to child sexual abuse imagery. Such figures underscore the necessity for robust protective measures, particularly in an era marked by increasing digital surveillance and public recording capabilities. The NSPCC, among others, has urged for enhanced protections, especially concerning popular social media platforms where many of these crimes are reported to occur.

Civil discourse on this subject has also touched upon broader issues of inclusion and representation. The recent controversy regarding a photography firm that unintentionally excluded children with additional support needs from school photographs speaks to ongoing challenges in ensuring that all children feel valued and included in public representations. First Minister Humza Yousaf has publicly condemned this practice, describing it as “shameful”, and called for systemic changes to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Amidst these evolving discussions, the imperative to create a safe environment for children in public spaces has never been clearer. As community leaders and advocates push for stricter regulations against the unsolicited photographing of children, the focus remains on fostering a sense of security and respect for privacy. Ensuring that children can enjoy parks and public spaces without fear or threat is a goal that resonates deeply across Scotland’s communities.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2
2. Paragraphs 3, 4, 5
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraph 7
5. Paragraph 8
6. Paragraph 9
7. Paragraph 10

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/playpark-fears-lead-calls-photos-35266685> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/playpark-fears-lead-calls-photos-35266685> - A Scots councillor has called for kids being photographed without their consent to be made a criminal offence. There have been repeated claims about incidents at public parks in Scotland involving children being pictured by strangers, with many of these not resulting in police action. The claims have led to calls to tighten up legislation surrounding capturing images in public spaces, with this currently only being covered by breach of the peace laws. Police have been urged to put on extra patrols at Robertson Park in Renfrew due to concerns about child safety, with Scottish Labour councillor Jamie McGuire claiming that they have committed to this. He spoke about ensuring that parks are a safe place for kids to play as tensions rise in the community. The Renfrew North and Braehead representative told the Scottish Daily Express: "Law and order is essential to keeping our communities safe, and I welcome the increased attention being given to Robertson Park by both Police Scotland and Renfrewshire Council. CCTV footage is now being reviewed, and monitoring in the area has been stepped up following the recent incidents. I’ve asked for more visible patrols from both police and council officers, particularly at key times of day, to make sure families and young people feel safe using the park. These incidents have caused understandable concern in the community, and rightly so. One of the most disturbing reports is that individuals have been taking photographs of children in the park. Let me be absolutely clear: this is completely unacceptable and should be treated as a criminal offence. It is wrong on every level and deeply distressing for any parent or young person. I’ll continue to press for strong and coordinated action to ensure this behaviour is stopped, those responsible are held to account, and Robertson Park remains a safe and welcoming place for everyone." Unconfirmed reports have been published on a local social media page which claimed that men were acting aggressively towards children and teenagers, including taking pictures of them. Community pages across the central belt have been swamped with allegations that strangers have been taking pictures of children, with incidents reported in Drumchapel, Dalmuir, Saltcoats and Shettleston, as well as in Edinburgh. Police Scotland released a statement after two men in Paisley were charged with "breach of the peace" following an incident which took place at Barshaw Park in the town on Mother's Day. Assistant Chief Constable Catriona Paton said: "Given concerns about filming, I would ask people to remind anyone videoing or photographing in public to respect those around them. Police officers balance the rights of people to film with the potential to cause fear or alarm and make decisions based on individual circumstances. I would encourage responsible use of social media and ask people not to share speculation or inaccurate information. Please think twice about what you read, share and believe from online sources. It is not illegal to take photographs or video footage in public places unless it is for criminal purposes." Police Scotland said it hadn't receive any reports of pictures being taken at Robertson Park.
3. <https://www.change.org/p/make-unconsented-photography-of-children-in-public-spaces-illegal-in-scotland> - A petition has been launched calling for the Scottish government to make non-consensual photography of children in public spaces illegal. The petition highlights concerns about children's safety and privacy, citing incidents where children's photographs were taken without their or their parents' approval. It references a 2018 analysis by the University of Cambridge, which found that children under 13 are often victims of digital privacy infringements due to insufficient legal coverage. The petition emphasizes the need for legislation to protect children's rights to privacy and safety in public spaces.
4. <https://www.inkl.com/news/mum-s-horror-as-men-take-secret-pictures-of-little-girl-during-buchanan-galleries-shopping-trip> - A mother expressed her horror after a group of men took secret photographs of her young daughter while shopping in Glasgow's Buchanan Galleries. The incident occurred near the food court, where the men were confronted and eventually deleted the images. The mother reported the incident to mall security, who escorted the group out. However, she was shocked to later learn from police that the group's behavior was not against the law. This incident has sparked calls for changes in legislation to make photographing children without consent illegal in Scotland.
5. <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/nspcc-more-than-3000-child-sexual-abuse-image-crimes-recorded-by-police-scotland-in-past-five-years> - The NSPCC has reported that more than 3,000 child sexual abuse image crimes have been recorded by Police Scotland over the past five years. Data reveals that 3,419 such crimes have been recorded since 2019, with over 700 offences logged each year in the last two years. The NSPCC is urging the UK Government to ensure better protection for children in private messaging environments, as many of these crimes involve platforms like Snapchat and Meta products. The charity calls for robust safeguards to prevent private messaging services from becoming safe havens for perpetrators of child sexual abuse.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/first-minister-humza-yousaf-scotland-twitter-cornwall-b1148524.html> - First Minister Humza Yousaf has described the omission of children with additional support needs (ASN) from some school photographs as "shameful." A photography firm and the local council have apologized to parents after it emerged that a photographer took additional images of a P5 class at Aboyne Primary School without ASN children. One of the children removed from the photographs was a wheelchair user, whose twin sister was distraught to learn she had been left out of an image offered to parents for purchase. The First Minister stated that such an incident should "never have happened at all."
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-68693874> - A photography firm has apologized after parents were offered a choice of class photos with or without pupils with complex needs at Aboyne Primary School in Aberdeenshire. Parents complained after it emerged that a photographer working for Tempest Photography took additional images of a P5 class without children with additional support needs. The company stated that this was "not standard procedure" and is taking the matter "very seriously." Aberdeenshire Council also apologized for the incident, describing it as "completely unacceptable."