# Inquiry reveals police in Scotland may have acted as super-spreaders during Covid-19



An inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland has revealed concerning allegations regarding police officers potentially acting as "super-spreaders" of the virus during the height of the crisis. The inquiry, chaired by Lord Brodie, has been examining decisions made by the Scottish Government and senior police officials in relation to the safety and health of frontline officers.

On Monday, significant evidence was presented by Calum Steele, the former general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation (SPF), along with ex-chairman David Hamilton and vice chairman Brian Jones. The trio voiced strong criticism of former Chief Constable Sir Iain Livingstone and the response of the Scottish Government to the pandemic. Steele described the decision not to prioritise frontline police during the vaccine rollout as “perverse” and a “betrayal,” highlighting that one officer reportedly attended 75 different household callouts in a single weekend.

During the proceedings, the inquiry learned that Sir Iain Livingstone allegedly rejected recommendations to administer spare vaccines to frontline officers and dismissed the use of reusable rubber masks that had proven effective in Northern Ireland due to concerns over appearances. Moreover, officers were reportedly discouraged from seeking alternatives to roadside breath-testing due to fears of transmitting the virus.

Mr Steele detailed how Police Scotland effectively “substantially absolved itself of health and safety responsibility” regarding the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), specifically mentioning FFP3 masks. Despite an agreement prior to the lockdown to supply these masks, he claimed that the force refused to monitor their usage. Concerns about the risk to officers were exacerbated when masks were reused throughout shifts.

He stated, “The issue of FFP3 masks is probably the best example of the police service knowing it has a health and safety obligation and then ignoring it.” Officers operating in situations where interactions required FFP3 masks did not have their usage logged correctly, which Steele indicated heightened the risk of spreading the virus.

Brian Jones additionally pointed out that a cost-effective rubber mask option was deemed unsuitable due to being perceived as "militaristic," suggesting a disconnect between safety measures and management decisions.

During the inquiry, discussions also emerged regarding the reluctance of Police Scotland to adopt alternative approaches for roadside breath-testing, with Steele labelling the response as “totally dismissive” and describing it as “institutional dishonesty." He remarked on the existing evidence that suggested a heightened risk related to aerosols, calling for a reassessment of procedures.

David Hamilton underscored the issue of vaccine distribution, stating it was “wholly inappropriate” for frontline officers not to be prioritised in vaccinations, suggesting that it reflected poor choices made by the Scottish Government regarding the health of those exposed to greater risks.

The inquiry continues in Edinburgh and is expected to uncover further details regarding the policies and actions taken during the pandemic and their implications for police officers and public health.

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

## References

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