



## November 2023: Edition 1

The SCSN Media Monitor provides a snapshot of Community Safety related media/press stories from across Scotland, the UK and sometimes internationally.

Some of the stories are not from Scotland, but are included as developments in the rest of the UK and internationally may be relevant to community safety here in Scotland and we hope will be of interest and contribute to sector conversations.

We will only source articles from media/press sources that correspond with our values as an organisation and that refrain from using stigmatising language or images.

## Crime & Justice

### Scottish Stories

#### Scottish rape convictions soar amid pandemic backlog for courts

RAPE convictions soared in 2021-22 as Scotland's courts attempted to deal with a massive backlog caused by the pandemic, figures show.

National statistics published by Scotland's chief statistician showed how the justice system was recovering from the pandemic but were not reflective of long-term trends due to the disruption caused by Covid-19. Sentences handed out were on average 14% longer in 2021-22 than the previous year, and convictions increased across all categories. - Read more [here](#).

#### Campaign launches to help keep teenagers safe over Halloween and Bonfire Night

Fearless – the youth programme of charity Crimestoppers – has launched a new campaign to keep teenagers across the north-east and Scotland safe this autumn.

Focusing on Halloween and Bonfire Night, the charity's pro-social behaviour messaging provides teens with information on how to stay safe and look out for their local community. The digital campaign will run across Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok – all key social media platforms used by young people, with each of the videos co-produced by the charity's youth volunteers. - Read more [here](#).

#### Riot police called as Halloween disorder and fires break out

Riot police are in attendance after a disturbance and fire broke out in Dundee on Tuesday evening. Police were called to the incident in the Beaulieu Avenue and Beaulieu Square area of the city's Kirkton area at around 7.45pm. Around 50 people were involved in the disorder which seen fires seal off roads and wheelie bins ablaze. - Read more [here](#).

## **Overcrowded prisons that 'warehouse' inmates are not going to turn them into better people. Community sentences might (Opinion)**

The crisis in prison numbers across the UK can't have escaped anyone's notice. Scotland and our counterparts over the Border are wrestling with solutions. I should be delighted, for we are speaking about community justice options, utilising community solutions to address offending and enable people to make restitution. - Read more [here](#).

## **UK Wide Stories**

### **Crime falls to lowest level on record, ONS says**

Crime in England and Wales has fallen to its lowest level on record, data from the Office for National Statistics shows. Incidents of violent crime have dropped by 28% in the year to June 2023.

The decline has been driven by a fall in criminal damage and fraud offences recorded by the police, ONS said. A separate Crime Survey for England and Wales, which polls members of the public, suggests theft has dropped by 20% below pre-pandemic levels. - Read more [here](#).

### **Met Police roll out facial recognition technology to tackle London's worst shoplifters**

Britain's biggest police force is using facial recognition technology to tackle London's worst shoplifters by matching CCTV stills to mugshots.

[The Metropolitan Police](#) said 149 suspects were identified within days after asking the capital's 12 leading retailers last month for images of their 30 most prolific unidentified offenders. Some of the suspects have links to serious crime, while all of them have previously been arrested for crimes including drug dealing, sexual offences, burglary, violence and possession of firearms. - Read more [here](#).

### **Staff shortages forcing England's prisons into emergency 'red' measures**

[Prisons](#) in England have run emergency "red regimes" 22 times this year, after falling below minimum staffing levels, the Guardian has learned. One prison reported using the most restricted level of regime for inmates – traditionally "an absolute last resort" – on 15 occasions.

A red regime, described by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as "not a sustainable position", is reserved for periods when staff resources have fallen below the locally agreed minimum and only a basic regime can be achieved. - Read more [here](#).

### **John Humphrys - Does Prison Work? (Comment)**

The degree of civilisation in a country "can be judged by entering its prisons". Those are the words of one of history's greatest writers and thinkers, Fyodor Dostoevsky. He spent four years doing hard labour in a prison in Siberia. He died soon after he was released.

If he was right when he wrote those words we should regard the degree of civilisation in this country as pretty shameful. That's because our prisons are in a shocking state. All the experts agree on that. But there are wider questions to be asked and they are very much in dispute. What are our prisons for and are they doing their job? - Read more [here](#).

# Policing

## Scottish Stories

### Mental health calls impacting police effectiveness, report says

Responding to mental health-related incidents is limiting Police Scotland's ability to prevent, investigate and detect crime, a report says. The study by the police watchdog said mental health demands had increased significantly in recent years. It warned too much of frontline officers' time was being taken up as a result. The report said mental health should be managed primarily by health and social care services. - Read more [here](#).

### A Police Scotland suicide prevention officer on his work

Every dot was once a heartbeat, each line a life cut short. The peaks and troughs of the carefully plotted graph tell of another family left grieving, and a community searching for answers. - Read more [here](#).

### Police Scotland call-handling overhauled after M9 crash

Police Scotland's call-handling system has been overhauled since a car crash on the M9 was not attended for days, a fatal accident inquiry (FAI) has heard. John Yuill, 28, and his partner Lamara Bell, 25, died after their car left the motorway near Stirling in 2015.

Retired sergeant Brian Henry previously said he was "tortured" by his failure to log a call about the incident. It later emerged he had been inadequately trained on the system before his overtime shift. - Read more [here](#).

## UK Wide Stories

### Police Federation chairman 'disappointed' in the Met after he was victim of crime

A senior police leader has told the home secretary her promise that officers would follow all reasonable lines of enquiry "is not working" after he was "disappointed" in his own force when he became a victim of crime.

Forces made the commitment after Suella Braverman said in August it was "unacceptable" crimes such as shoplifting, criminal damage and phone or car theft have been treated as "less important". - Read more [here](#).

### Police reveal disproportionate stop and search rate

Black people are 8.8 times more likely to be stopped and searched by Sussex Police.

The figures were shared by Deputy Chief Constable Dave McLaren during a meeting with Police and Crime Commissioner Katy Bourne. Mr McLaren said there was "a lot of work going on in the background" to address the issue. He added Sussex Police was "fully committed to understanding exactly why we have that disproportionality and to do everything that's within our powers to make sure that we reduce or eradicate that". - Read more [here](#).

### London police defy ban on badges linked to far right and white supremacy

Metropolitan police officers are openly defying orders not to wear badges appropriated by the far right and linked to white supremacy. In July, the force's chief, Mark Rowley, banned officers from wearing the "thin blue line" badge saying that in the US an equivalent symbol had been used by "hard-right groups". - Read more [here](#).

# Alcohol & Other Drugs

## Scottish Stories

### Naloxone: Life-saving overdose reversal drug expanded to pharmacies

COMMUNITY pharmacies across Scotland are being provided with a drug which can reverse overdoses. The Scottish Government said all community pharmacies will now hold two Naloxone kits, which can be used to reverse opioid overdoses. Drugs and alcohol policy minister Elena Whitham said it "provides a substantial increase in life-saving emergency access". - Read more [here](#).

### Trying to get free of drugs in prison is an almost impossible task – Karyn McCluskey

There is something humbling about attending an **Alcoholics Anonymous** meet, particularly where they invite those not dealing with alcoholism to bear witness to the participants' journey and the 12 steps. "I'm (insert name) and I'm an alcoholic" is how they start their stories, recalling the first taste of alcohol, the depths of despair, then recovery and abstinence.

A friend who credits AA with his life said: "It's the biggest, free, public health service in the country." And indeed the world because it's online now; you need never be without a meeting or support. They're also there to help those attending the specialist Glasgow Alcohol Court, which seeks to reduce the rates of reoffending by supporting individuals with underlying alcohol issues. - Read more [here](#).

## UK Wide & International Stories

### Drug decriminalisation policy 'could help with criminal and social issues', Irish report finds

A REPORT ON efforts to decriminalise drugs in Ireland and four other jurisdictions has concluded that advances have been made in recent years but there is a lack of political will in Ireland. The report by the Scottish Drugs Forum also claimed that the success of the marriage equality and abortion referendums have aided efforts for decriminalisation by opening discussion on more socially progressive topics. - Read more [here](#).

### How Regulating Drugs Can Protect Young People

This blog makes the case for the legalisation and regulation of drugs by explaining how it can protect young and vulnerable people in our communities. This piece is an edited extract of Transform's [Debating Drugs](#) guide.

Rather than protecting young and vulnerable people, the so-called 'drug war' (prohibition) has placed them at ever-greater risk of: the potential harms of drug use; being caught up in drug-related violence; and the chaos of a supply chain controlled by organised crime. We want a market [legalised and regulated](#) by responsible government authorities, combined with the redirection of enforcement spending into proven health and prevention programmes aimed at young people. - Read more [here](#).

### EU warns of 'child soldiers' exploited by drug gangs

Children exploited by drug gangs face the same plight as "child soldiers" forced into killing and maiming people for criminals and cartels, the EU has said, as it launched a series of initiatives to crack down on cocaine smuggling. The European commissioner for home affairs, Ylva Johansson, said young people were becoming caught up in an increasingly booming and brutal trade that was one of Europe's biggest security threats. - Read more [here](#).

## Poverty/Wellbeing Economy

### UK only 16th in Scotianomics Wellbeing Economy Index

THE UK places only 16th out of 33 nations on the new Scotianomics Wellbeing Economy Index. The index measures countries across five dimensions that make up the wellbeing economic approach, which treats quality of life, equality, fairness, happiness and health as economic outcomes that should be given equal weight in decision making as GDP growth. - Read more [here](#).

### Scotland sees 'by far the lowest rise' in destitution levels in UK

The UK has seen a "shameful increase" in destitution, though Scotland has had "by far the lowest" rise in the numbers suffering from this, a new report has found.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) found that across the UK, there were an estimated 3.8 million people suffering from destitution – with this including more than one million children. According to the report, rising levels of destitution mean almost two-and-a-half times as many people are suffering as there were in 2017, with nearly three times as many youngsters affected. - Read more [here](#).

## Hate Crime/Equalities

### SNP to look at creating buffer zones around asylum seeker accommodation

THE creation of protest-free zones around Home Office-provided accommodation in Scotland is set to be explored by the Scottish Government. A proposal to look at protecting refugees from far-right protests outside their homes was agreed to unanimously by delegates at SNP conference on Tuesday. The resolution was put forward by the Govan Kingston Branch on the back of anti-asylum demonstrations outside the Muthu Glasgow River Hotel - which houses asylum seekers - this year. - Read more [here](#).

### Trans hate crime rises sharply in South East - figures

Recorded hate crimes against transgender people in the South East have risen to the highest level in five years, Home Office figures have shown. More than 400 of the offences were recorded last year - an 80% increase on the number in 2018. Kent Police said the increase could be explained by a rise in reporting and more "trust" from communities. - Read more [here](#).

### 'Pervasive and relentless' racism on the rise in Europe, survey finds

Racism is "pervasive and relentless" and on the rise in [Europe](#), with nearly half of black people in member states surveyed by the EU reporting discrimination, from the verbal abuse of their children to being blocked by landlords from renting homes.

In every walk of life, from schools to the job market, housing and health, a survey by the EU's rights agency of people of African descent found high levels of discrimination, with some of the worst results recorded in Austria and [Germany](#), where far-right parties have been on the rise. - Read more [here](#).

### US hate crimes are rising - this is how to stop them

Hate crimes reached an all-time high in the US last year, according to the FBI. But there are some who believe the trend can be reversed. On 13 May 2022, 66-year-old Garnell Whitfield spent the day with his 86-year-old mother constructing a raised planter box for her garden that he hoped to gift her for mother's day. - Read more [here](#).



# Climate Crisis Corner



## Scottish Government accused of 'failure' to create environmental court

THE Scottish Government has been accused of an “unlawful failure” to consider the establishment of an environmental court.

Ministers were obliged to consult on the effectiveness of governance arrangements relating to the environment to ensure continuity in the wake of Brexit. Part of this involved considering whether current access to justice on environmental issues was effective and if the establishment of an environmental court could improve outcomes. - Read more [here](#).

## Time to improve planning for future floods after Storm Babet batters Scotland

[Storm Babet](#) has rightly been called unprecedented by weather experts, causing some of the most intense rains and floods ever seen in this country. Flooding across the UK [has caused half a billion pounds worth of damage](#) and thousands of Scots have had their lives turned upside down. Understandably, now, people are starting to ask whether more could be done to prevent such devastation. - Read more [here](#).

## Storm Babet: 'It's the price of climate change', says expert

A CLIMATE change expert has said Scotland can likely expect even more intense storms than Babet due to global warming. Storm Babet has wreaked havoc on the north east of Scotland. Parts of Angus are accessible only by boat after heavy flooding on Thursday night, including the entire town of Brechin – with First Minister Humza Yousaf saying he “cannot stress how dangerous” conditions are for residents. - Read more [here](#).

## More than 4,000 English flood defences 'poor or very poor', analysis finds

More than 4,000 of England's vital flood defences are so damaged they are almost useless, including hundreds in areas battered by Storm Babet.

Nearly 800 critical assets – defined as those where there is a high risk to life and property – were in a “poor” or “very poor” condition in the 10 English counties worst affected by last week's historic downpours. The analysis will add to growing anger from flood-hit communities who have accused the authorities of being [ill-equipped and complacent](#) in the run-up to Storm Babet. - Read more [here](#).

83 Princes Street  
Edinburgh, EH2 2ER  
0131 225 8700/7772

Email: [info@scsn.org.uk](mailto:info@scsn.org.uk)  
Company Ltd. SC357649  
Charity No. SC040464

[www.safercommunitiesscotland.org](http://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org)

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