



COMMUNITY SAFETY MEDIA MONITOR



October 2023: Edition 2

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.

Policing

Scottish Stories

New Police Scotland chief agrees force is institutionally racist

Police Scotland's new chief constable says she agrees that the force is guilty of institutional discrimination. In her first day in the job, Jo Farrell backed the controversial statement made earlier this year by her predecessor Sir Iain Livingstone. She said it was a "difficult message", but she was determined to drive forward "an anti-discriminatory agenda." - Read more [here](#).

Not all Police Scotland officers have vetting records

An inspection by the police watchdog also revealed some officers and staff had not been vetted since they started their careers. The force is now being advised to carry out an urgent review to make sure all of its officers and staff have been through the proper process. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland wants vetting to be repeated at least every decade.

Police Scotland's Deputy Chief Constable Alan Speirs said the safeguarding of the force's values and standards "has never been stronger" and that HMICS "rightly highlights the high standards of our vetting". - Read more [here](#).

Police warn officer numbers 'could fall by more than 2,000'

Police Scotland has warned it could be forced to make compulsory redundancies as the force faces having to cut 800 officers and staff by April 2024 – with the prospect that overall numbers could fall by more than 2,000 over the next four years if budgets are not increased.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), meanwhile, said it may have to take 18 fire appliances off the road as a result of financial pressures, with chief officer Ross Haggart raising fears about the impact this could have on community safety. - Read more [here](#).

Some crimes will not be investigated in Police Scotland pilot project

Some minor crimes will no longer be investigated as part of a project being piloted in the north east of Scotland. Police Scotland said it wants to give officers more time to focus on responding to emergencies and keeping people safe from harm.

An example of where no further action may be taken was a garden theft with no CCTV or eye-witness evidence. Police Scotland said: "Hard choices are being made to deliver effective policing within the funding available." - Read more [here](#).

Scots cops save lives of more than 300 overdose victims in past year using naloxone

More than 300 [addicts](#) who overdosed in the past year survived after police were able to give them the life-saving drug naloxone. [Police Scotland](#) have revealed that officers, who all carry the nasal spray, were able to administer it on 325 occasions and all but eight people were saved. - Read more [here](#).

UK Wide Stories

Police officers widely misusing body-worn cameras

Police officers are switching off their body-worn cameras when force is used, as well as deleting footage and sharing videos on WhatsApp.

A BBC investigation has uncovered more than 150 reports of camera misuse by forces in England and Wales - described as "shocking" by a leading officer. In one case, siblings faced a two-year legal battle over footage showing officers' use of force against them. The Home Office says police use of cameras must be lawful and justified. - Read more [here](#).

What did we learn from the walkout of firearms officers? The Met looks after its own, not the public (Comment)

Policing has a problem with accountability – one that I saw throughout my time as an officer and, later, as chief constable. This stems from the belief, held by much of the police service, that it is under constant attack from all sides, and that a lily-livered leadership is failing to support it, or understand the challenges of delivering frontline policing.

The narrative of the "hero cop" looms large, as does the notion of the "thin blue line", which has other connotations in the US, but in the UK symbolises the cops holding back the tide of lawlessness in the face of a hostile public and press. - Read more [here](#).

Neighbourhood Policing Initiative Helping to Keep Women and Girls Safe on Nights Out in Halifax

Calderdale District Police have implemented a mobile safety pod in Halifax Town Centre to create a place of safety in the nighttime economy. The proactive initiative gives those enjoying the nighttime economy access to services and support from police officers and partners.

The 'safety pod' is a Neighbourhood Policing van staffed by Police Officers, Community Support Officers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA's) can be available on request. - Read more [here](#).

Cyber Crime/Security & Online Safety

No 10 worried AI could be used to create advanced weapons that escape human control

Concerns that criminals or terrorists could use artificial intelligence to cause mass destruction will dominate discussion at a summit of world leaders, as concern grows in Downing Street about the power of the next generation of technological advances.

British officials are touring the world ahead of an [AI safety summit in Bletchley Park in November](#) as they look to build consensus over a joint statement that would warn about the dangers of rogue actors using the technology to cause death on a large scale. - Read more [here](#).

WormGPT: AI tool designed to help cybercriminals will let hackers develop attacks on large scale, experts warn

A ChatGPT-style tool designed to assist cybercriminals will let hackers develop sophisticated attacks on a significantly larger scale, researchers have warned.

The creators of WormGPT have branded it as an equivalent to [the popular AI chatbot](#) developed by OpenAI to produce human-like answers to questions. But unlike ChatGPT, it does not have protections built in to stop people misusing the technology. - Read more [here](#).

Greater Manchester police officers' data hacked in cyber-attack

The personal details of tens of thousands of public sector workers could have been breached in a cyber-attack that has hit two of Britain's biggest police forces, an expert has said.

More than 12,500 [Greater Manchester](#) police (GMP) officers and staff were put on alert on Thursday that their private data had been compromised in a hack that also hit the Metropolitan police last month. - Read more [here](#).

Mental Health/Suicide/Trauma

Scottish Stories

NHS mental health services 'slow and complicated'

Access to adult mental health services is "slow and complicated", a new critical report from Audit Scotland has concluded. It warns ministers' plans to improve access are "not on track" despite commitments to increase spending on mental health.

The report found people in rural areas, those living in poverty and those from ethnic minority backgrounds particularly struggle to get mental health help. - Read more [here](#).

UK Wide Stories

Suicide prevention drive launched in England amid concern for young people

Ministers have vowed to reduce suicide rates in England with the launch of more than 100 new initiatives amid particular concerns over rising deaths and self-harm among children and young people. The pledge to reverse the trends within two and a half years came as the government launched its first prevention strategy in more than a decade. In 2022, there were 5,275 suicides in England, equivalent to 10.6 suicides per 100,000 people, according to the Office for National Statistics. - Read more [here](#).

Think before shouting at your child: to them, words can be as harmful as physical blows - Professor Peter Fonagy

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is a phrase often repeated to children in the hope that they will learn that they cannot be hurt by name-calling or verbal abuse. In fact, words are humans' most powerful tools, and harsh language used against children can damage them for the rest of their life.

It is natural to respond to a "naughty" child by shouting – and children are forgiving of, and are surprisingly empathic in relation to, parental stress. But let us not deceive ourselves that verbal intimidation such as shouting, yelling or screaming at children leaves no scars. Or that being humiliated and ridiculed leaves children unaffected.

A pioneering systematic review on the [impact of childhood verbal abuse](#) by adults [published this week](#) suggests that over 40% of children are exposed to verbal aggression, verbal hostility or harsh verbal discipline from adults around them. For half, the experience is at least weekly – and for an unfortunate 10%, it is a daily experience. - Read more [here](#).

Shoplifting/Theft

Scottish Stories

Scottish Government urged to act over 'tsunami' of retail crime

Scotland's shopkeepers are facing a "tsunami" of shoplifting and abuse, with criminals and organised [crime](#) groups believing "they are untouchable," an industry body has warned.

The Scottish Grocers' Federation (SGF) is calling on the Scottish Government to come up with an "emergency plan" to tackle the surge in retail crime. - Read more [here](#).

Co-op boss warns of shoplifting 'anarchy'

A Co-op boss has warned that stores are descending into "anarchy" as staff face a sharp rise in retail crime. Operations director Kate Graham said the company was facing prolific shoplifting to order and a rise in armed robberies.

UK stores have seen a 35% increase in crime in the past year and more than 900 staff were physically assaulted. Earlier this week, the latest [Scottish crime statistics](#) revealed that shoplifting increased by 21% over the past year, although the figure is still lower than in 2019 before the Covid pandemic. - Read more [here](#).

UK Stories

Life in bike theft Britain: 'Afterwards, I couldn't face going outside'

It is a crime that can leave victims financially and emotionally crushed - yet is very rarely solved by police. Is anything being done to stop it? It took thieves just 47 seconds to steal Rosie Wetherhill's ebike from outside a Chinese takeaway.

Wetherhill, a 23-year-old bike courier from Leeds, had considered locking her bike to the railing when she went in to collect the order, but she knew the takeaway was fast. So she locked the back wheel with a D-lock instead. A mistake. - Read more [here](#).

Alcohol & Other Drugs

Scottish Stories

MSPs unite to call for compassion and kindness as See Beyond campaign is debated in Parliament

In recognition of the impact on those left behind when someone they love dies because of alcohol and drugs, MSPs used a debate on [See Beyond – See the Lives – Scotland](#) in the Scottish Parliament this week to call for more compassion and support.

Led by Miles Briggs MSP and supported by Monica Lennon MSP, who both lost their fathers to alcohol, a cross-party group of MSPs shared their experiences of alcohol and drug problems, and deaths, amongst people in their lives and in the areas they represent as MSPs. - Read more [here](#).

UK Wide Stories

Allow drug testing at festivals next summer, new report tells Home Office

The Home Office has been strongly urged to establish on-site drug testing at music festivals for summer 2024 in a bid to cut unnecessary deaths. In a new report by the [Home Affairs Committee](#) published today (August 31), MPs were also urged to grant the necessary licenses to local authorities to allow them to establish such schemes. - Read more [here](#).

Female drug users at risk of exploitation in mixed-sex treatment groups, study finds

Female drug users are at risk of being groomed into sex work and other forms of exploitation when they attend treatment programmes with men, according to new research. Some women reported feeling vulnerable to “predatory males” in mixed groups where they were often outnumbered two-to-one by men, but said they were not given an option to access women-only treatment programmes. - Read more [here](#).

Synthetic opioids and sedative may be behind rise of fatal overdoses in West Midlands

Synthetic opioids and a tranquilliser that have killed thousands of drug users in the US may be behind a rise of dozens of fatal overdoses in the [West Midlands](#). About 30 deaths over two months this summer are being examined for the involvement of the heroin substitute nitazenes and the sedative xylazine, [Birmingham](#) city council's director of public health, Justin Varney, told the Guardian. Nitazenes are up to 100 times more powerful than heroin. - Read more [here](#).

Other Community Safety

Could a Scottish council run out of money?

North Lanarkshire is the latest Scottish council to deliver difficult news about local services, with plans to close libraries, swimming pools and sports centres. It is far from alone, with all 32 local authorities facing similar dilemmas. How bad is the financial situation, and is there a risk that a council could actually run out of cash? - Read more [here](#).

The Tories say 15-minute cities are sinister. That's nonsense – here's the truth

Following hard on the prime minister's defence of the drivers who are supposedly victimised by London's Ulez extension, and Penny Mordaunt's rubbishing of [20mph speed limits](#) in Wales (currently in force in parts of her own constituency), we now have the transport secretary, Mark Harper, [denouncing](#) “sinister ... so-called 15-minute cities”. - Read more [here](#).

Climate Crisis Corner



Climate crisis costing \$16m an hour in extreme weather damage, study estimates

The damage caused by the climate crisis through extreme weather has cost \$16m (£13m) an hour for the past 20 years, according to a new estimate.

Storms, floods, heatwaves and droughts have taken many lives and destroyed swathes of property in recent decades, with global heating making the events more frequent and intense. The study is the first to calculate a global figure for the increased costs directly attributable to human-caused [global heating](#). - Read more [here](#).

World breaches key 1.5C warming mark for record number of days

The world is breaching a key warming threshold at a rate that has scientists concerned, a BBC analysis has found. On about a third of days in 2023, the average global temperature was at least 1.5C higher than pre-industrial levels. Staying below that marker long-term is widely considered crucial to avoid the most damaging impacts of climate change. - Read more [here](#).

Suicide rates increased after extreme drought in the Murray-Darling Basin – we have to do better as climate change intensifies

The [impact on mental health of weather extremes](#) such as drought is a growing concern due to climate change. Rural communities feel the impact of drought much more than urban residents. Our [new research](#) looks at the link between drought and suicide rates in one of Australia's biggest farming areas, the Murray-Darling Basin.

Drawing on monthly data from 2006 to 2016, our findings were alarming. We found, for instance, that one more month of extreme drought in the previous 12 months was strongly associated with a 32% increase in monthly suicide rates. - Read more [here](#).

Young people to take 32 European countries to court over climate policies

Six young people are preparing to appear at the [European court of human rights](#) to try to compel 32 nations to rapidly escalate their emissions reductions in the world's largest climate legal action to date. Aged from 11 to 24, the six Portuguese claimants, say they were driven to act by their experiences in the wildfires that ripped through the Leiria region in 2017, killing 66 people and destroying 20,000 hectares of forest. - Read more [here](#).

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