



January 2024

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 prison system facing 'considerable risks' amid GEOAmeY issues

Scotland's prison system is facing considerable risks, including "poor performance" by the company that transports prisoners to and from custody, a report has found. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) contracted GEOAmeY in 2018 to transfer prisoners in Scotland between prisons, courts, police custody units and healthcare facilities. - Read more [here](#).

Overcrowded Barlinnie risks human rights claims finds report

Barlinnie jail is holding hundreds more prisoners than it is designed for. A new report has found that last month the prison held 1406 men despite it being designed for 987. It means the jail is 42% over capacity and many inmates are kept in double cells.

An Audit Scotland report into the overall prison estate stated cell sizes at HMP Barlinnie do not meet expected standards, and due to overcrowding "there is a lack of regime availability and work opportunities within the prison". - Read more [here](#).

The Scottish prisoners making hip-hop behind bars

"I'm living my life / It's time to move on / 'Cause there's no guarantees that tomorrow will come." Robert, 29, prisoner.

This is hip-hop made inside Barlinnie, Scotland's largest prison and where the Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi was held. A rather ghostly reminder of his former presence are the satellite dishes, paid for by the Libyan government so that he could watch sport, which still hang off the side of the building where he was kept. - Read more [here](#).

'Fear, shame, hopelessness': how young men are blackmailed online

Ben was just 14 when he was tricked on Facebook into chatting to someone he believed was the female friend of a friend. That person then revealed himself to be a man, and used threats and blackmail to coerce the boy into sending sexual images and performing sex acts live on Skype, with the videos then shared with five other men.

Ben endured spiralling demands for two years, and attempted suicide, before a police investigation prompted by another young victim revealed the main perpetrator's web of extortion and he was eventually jailed. - Read more [here](#).

UK Wide Stories

Trainee prison officers 'encouraged to be more violent' in sexist graduate scheme that sees a third drop out

Female graduate trainee prison officers have described a toxic and sexist culture where they were encouraged to be more violent as new figures show one in three on the scheme drop out, *The Independent* has learned.

Established in 2016 as a response to high rates of reoffending, Unlocked has hired around 750 young officers, 70 per cent of whom have been female and 30 per cent male. - Read more [here](#).

Hundreds of women and children trafficked to UK to shoplift

Hundreds of vulnerable women and children are being trafficked to the UK to shoplift for Eastern European crime groups, the BBC has learned.

One company in Scotland told [BBC File on 4](#) it had identified a gang with 154 shoplifters stealing high-value items in bulk to sell or ship abroad. Members have been arrested in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Darlington. Retailers Against Crime (RAC) said it was tracking 56 shoplifting groups that are funding organised crime. - Read more [here](#).

Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour: Here's how we can start to tackle this blight on Scotland's town centres—Karyn McCluskey

Headlines about anti-social behaviour abound. There is little doubt that a tiny virus called Covid caused ripples throughout our lives that are still evident – the butterfly effect writ large. Children missed school, fell behind, sometimes never returned or became so disengaged that exclusion and truancy formed a large part of their existence. Add to that a cost-of-living crisis, parents possibly facing their own demons, and it's little surprise that schools are reporting challenges with behaviour. - Read more [here](#).

Fire Brigade and police unions call for UK Government to restrict sale of fireworks

The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Scotland have urged the UK Government to restrict the sale of fireworks after chaos on Bonfire Night.

The unions have called for Westminster to ban fireworks from general public sale or to give the Scottish Government powers to do so. - Read more [here](#).

Alcohol & Other Drugs

Scottish Stories

ScotRail consults customers on ending alcohol ban

ScotRail is asking customers if they support ending the blanket ban on drinking alcohol on its services, amid a claim it is "unworkable". The online survey comes more than three years after it was introduced as a temporary measure to help stop the spread of Covid-19. The future of the ban is a decision for ministers, rather than ScotRail. - Read more [here](#).

Estimated 900 suspected drug deaths in first nine months of 2023

There were an estimated 900 suspected drug deaths between January and September 2023, according to official statistics. The Scottish Government has produced a quarterly report from Police Scotland's management information to provide an indication of current trends in suspected substance-related deaths.

The number of suspected drug deaths in the first nine months of the year increased by 13% – 103 people – compared with the same period of 2022. - Read more [here](#).

Drugs probe as teenager dies after rave at SWG3 in Glasgow

A teenager has died after attending a rave in Glasgow on New Year's Day. The 18-year-old became unwell at SWG3 and was taken to hospital where she was later pronounced dead. Police are looking at drugs as one line of inquiry. The woman is the third person to have died after going to an event at SWG3 in the last four months. - Read more [here](#).

UK Wide & International Stories

Drug poisoning deaths in England and Wales at highest level in 30 years

Drug poisoning deaths in England and Wales have risen for the 10th consecutive year to the highest level since records began 30 years ago, with nearly half of deaths now involving an opiate. There were 4,907 deaths related to drug poisoning in 2022, equivalent to a rate of 84.4 deaths per million people, according to the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS). - Read more [here](#).

Is the UK sleepwalking into a lethal US-style opioid drugs crisis?

The UK is facing a US-style drugs-death crisis over lethal super-strength drugs contaminating British illegal markets, with investigations launched into 94 deaths in the past six months.

Potent [synthetic opioids](#) known as [nitazenes](#) – some of which are 500 times stronger than morphine – have been detected in at least 20 postcodes around the UK since September, in a worrying surge in availability, *The Independent* can reveal. - Read more [here](#).

Biden pardons thousands of people convicted of marijuana possessions

Joe Biden is pardoning thousands of people who were convicted of use and simple possession of marijuana on federal lands and in the District of Columbia, the White House said Friday – his latest round of executive clemencies meant to rectify racial disparities in the justice system.

The US president is also granting clemency to 11 people serving what the White House called "disproportionately long" sentences for nonviolent drug offenses. - Read more [here](#).

Policing

Scottish Stories

More than 1,200 Police Scotland officers 'unable to attend crimes'

More than 1,200 police officers in Scotland are not able to be deployed, according to figures obtained by STV News. According to a freedom of information request to Police Scotland, 7.5% of the country's 16,613 officers have 'non deployable' status – meaning they are unable to be sent out to deal with crimes. The reasons why an officer might be given that status can vary – due to ill health, an injury, or because they are facing disciplinary action. - Read more [here](#).

Police Scotland failing to challenge bad behaviour - report

Misconduct is under-reported in Police Scotland and the force is failing to challenge unacceptable behaviour, a watchdog has warned. A report by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) also found trainee officers feel "ill-equipped" to deal with the the job. It recognises continued budget pressures and a lack of investment. But HMICS praised efforts to address "key workforce issues" as well as a focus on ethics and human rights. - Read more [here](#).

Calls for Taser ban after Police Scotland statistics show weapons used 131 times against children

Tasers have been used more than 130 times against children since Scotland's national police force began deploying specially trained officers to use the controversial devices, according to a new report. While the vast majority of the incidents saw officers draw or point the high voltage appliances at youngsters, they were discharged against under-18s on nine occasions. - Read more [here](#).

The police officers dealing with a surge in mental health call-outs

Less than an hour into the backshift at Edinburgh's Howdenhall police station, a call comes through about a man armed with an axe and knife and in a state of distress. The police race to the scene and within minutes the immediate threat is safely resolved. But for some of the officers, it's only the start of their involvement with the man. - Read more [here](#).

UK Wide Stories

Victims of domestic abuse have lost trust in Met police, says senior officer

Victims of domestic abuse have lost confidence in Britain's biggest police force after a series of scandals, a senior officer has admitted. Det Supt Andrew Wadey, the Metropolitan police's lead for domestic abuse and stalking, acknowledged the force had "let women and girls down badly in the past" but insisted they were committed to rebuilding trust. - Read more [here](#).

Surveillance Britain: where police are quietly trying to access 50m photos for one mass lineup (Comment)

When you send off your details and photo to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) for your first driving licence, you're probably thinking about being able to do things like taking friends on a road trip, dropping the kids off to school or helping elderly relatives get around. Few of us, I imagine, are willingly signing up to join a massive police lineup. - Read more [here](#).

Hate Crime/Equalities

'Sense of exhaustion': Scottish trans community reacts to UK veto of gender reforms

The court of session ruling [upholding the UK government's veto](#) on Scotland's gender recognition reforms contributed to a "sense of exhaustion" in the trans community, said Jennie Kermode, a writer, film-maker and adviser for Trans Media Watch, based near Glasgow.

"People are still hopeful that this case can proceed further but there is a sense of exhaustion that there is always this waiting, which is the case for all trans people whether it's gender recognition or waiting lists which are so long even to get psychological help." - Read more [here](#).

UK Equalities Minister Goes on Anti-LGBTQ Rant in Leaked Audio

The UK's equalities minister mocked [LGBTQ rights](#), questioned same-sex marriage, and called trans women "men" in an audio recording obtained by VICE World News.

Kemi Badenoch, considered a rising star in the ruling Conservative Party, made the comments in her parliamentary office in 2018, a year after being elected as an MP and a year before she was first appointed a minister by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. - Read more [here](#).

Public consultation begins on LGBTQ+ housing scheme in Manchester

A public consultation has been launched for the "UK's first purpose-built" LGBTQ+ housing scheme. The development is earmarked for the vacant site of the former Spire Hospital in Whalley Range, Manchester. Great Places Housing Association plans to build 80 one and two-bedroom flats for people aged 55 or over with shared facilities including lounges. Paul Martin, from the LGBT Foundation, encouraged people to share their views on the project. - Read more [here](#).

General Community Safety Stories

Anti-terrorism referrals for far right extremism rise in Scotland

The number of Scots referred to the UK Government's counter-terrorism programme due to far right extremism has risen over the last year, according to the latest Police Scotland data.

[The figures](#), released today, show that 31 of the 87 Scotland residents referred to the anti-terror [Prevent](#) programme in the year ending 31 March 2023 held right wing extremist beliefs – more than triple the amount attracted to Islamic extremism. - Read more [here](#).

British politics is rotting from the bottom up: pity our crisis-hit local councils

Every review of Britain 2023 says the same. The country is not being well run. From policing to care homes, from postal services to sewage spills, from youth clubs to potholes, everywhere is failure. Small wonder just [20% of Britons](#) now have any faith in their national politicians, one of the lowest figures in a western democracy. Nowhere is this decline more evident than in local government. It is going bust. - Read more [here](#).

Climate Crisis & Community Safety

"We can't have safer
communities without a
liveable climate."

Scotland's climate 'changing faster than expected'

Scotland's climate is changing faster than expected, scientists have warned. A study by the James Hutton Institute in Aberdeen says February in some areas is already 2.5C warmer while rainfall is at levels forecast for 2050.

They are concerned that the changes could affect food production and efforts to protect peatlands which store carbon. It comes as the world broke a series of weather records including the hottest year and the hottest month in July. - Read more [here](#).

Climate crisis: 2023 was UK's second-hottest year on record

The UK had its second-hottest year on record in 2023, according to provisional data from the Met Office, as the climate crisis continued to deliver elevated temperatures.

Such a warm year would have occurred only once in 500 years without human-caused global heating, the scientists said. The heat [peaked in June](#) and September, both record hot months in a series dating back to 1884. The UK's 10 warmest years have all occurred since 2003. - Read more [here](#).

Climate crisis could cause 10,000 extra UK deaths a year by 2050, says health body

The [climate crisis](#) could cause up to 10,000 extra deaths in the UK every year by the 2050s as a result of extreme heat and bring a host of tropical diseases, a stark report has warned.

The worst-case scenario, published in a damning document by the UK [Health](#) Security Agency (UKHSA) on Monday, would see average temperatures rise by 4.3C, bringing an estimated twelvefold rise in heat-related deaths by 2070. It adds that deaths could increase by one-and-a-half times in the 2030s. - Read more [here](#).

UK floods – and deaths – will keep rising without proper defences and conservation

Large areas of England [are submerged](#) under murky flood water, with homes damaged, farm crops rotting, and rail routes and roads unusable. The UK is a rainy country, and some parts of it are quite used to regular floods, but the situation is worsening. Global climate breakdown caused by the burning of fossil fuels is causing more unpredictable and extreme weather events and the domestic infrastructure is underfunded and cannot cope sufficiently. - Read more [here](#).

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The Scottish Community Safety Network
(SCSN) is supported by funding from the
Scottish Government Building Safer
Communities - Safer Communities Division



 Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba