

Press release: Man who threatened Hertfordshire police officers jailed

A man who pointed a gun at police officers has today been sent to prison after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred his sentence to the Court of Appeal for being too low.

Sebastian Alcock, 38, threatened 2 police officers with an imitation firearm. The police officers had received reports of a man behaving suspiciously, and asked Alcock to get out of the car for a drug search. At this point he became aggressive, struggling violently against the officers, and produced a gun, which at the time was assumed to be real. The police officers feared for their lives and escaped, and firearm officers arrested Alcock shortly after.

Alcock was originally sentenced at St Albans Crown Court in August, where he was given 15 months imprisonment suspended for 2 years. Today, after the Solicitor General's referral, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 3 years immediate imprisonment.

Commenting on the sentence increase, the Solicitor General said:

"This was a serious violent incident that was made even worse by Alcock's threats using an imitation firearm towards police officers working in the line of duty. The Court of Appeal has recognised this today."

Press release: Secretary of State welcomes Independent Reporting Commission report on tackling paramilitary activity

Welcoming the report, Mrs Bradley said:

I want to record my sincere thanks to the Independent Reporting Commission for their first substantive report on tackling paramilitary activity. It is deeply regrettable that in 2018, tackling paramilitary activity still remains a critical issue for Northern Ireland, not least at this current political impasse.

This is a significant report which benchmarks the progress which

has been achieved to date but reminds us of the continued and challenging work still to be done to ensure that communities are free from the threat of paramilitarism. The IRC has acknowledged the good work carried out to date, but they too have pointed to the challenges of dealing with this issue in the absence of a functioning Executive. That is why I remain resolute in finding a way forward to get devolved government up and running again as quickly as possible in order to that the Commission will see further progress in the coming year.

Paramilitarism is a scourge on our society. It was never justified in the past, it cannot be justified today and these groups should have no place in our society. We must all continue to work together to keep communities safe and free from these totally unacceptable attacks.

[Press release: Highways England gears up for winter](#)

Highways England's team of 1,300 specially trained gritter drivers based across the country are geared up for winter, ready to keep drivers moving.

The company responsible for the country's motorways and major A roads has over 500 salt spreading vehicles ready, around the clock, to help drivers get to their destinations safely.

To monitor the weather Highways England uses 245 anemometers to check wind speeds and has over 260 weather stations at locations across its network. The overhead warning signs are also used to advise motorists of severe weather.

Highways England's national winter and severe weather team leader, Paul Furlong, said:

Whether people are heading to friends and family or commuting to work, we care about people journeys and during any severe weather our teams will be working around the clock to keep traffic moving.

Safety is our priority and we're asking drivers to make sure they and their vehicles are also prepared for any eventuality. Before you set out, check your vehicle, the road conditions and the weather forecast. If conditions are poor, and journeys are not essential, consider waiting until the weather gets better – this should improve journeys, and give our gritters a chance to treat

the roads.

During severe winter weather drivers are urged to follow this advice:

In snow and ice

Drivers should stick to the main roads where they can and only travel if necessary. Drivers are also encouraged to make sure they have a winter kit in their vehicle, including an ice scraper and de-icer, warm clothes and blankets and sunglasses to cope with the low winter sun.

In high winds

Drivers should slow down and avoid using exposed sections of road if possible. Lorries, caravans and motorbikes are at particular risk.

In heavy rain

Drivers should keep well back from the vehicle in front, gradually ease off the accelerator if the steering becomes unresponsive, and slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles makes it difficult to see and be seen.

In fog

Drivers should switch on their fog lights and not use lights on full beam as the fog will reflect the light back. If drivers really cannot see, they should consider stopping until it is safe to continue.

To keep informed about driving conditions along their journeys, drivers are advised to follow messages on the overhead signs and listen to radio updates. Further information can be found by visiting [our traffic website](#) or calling the Highways England Information Line on 0300 123 5000.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Minister for Africa](#)

statement on Cameroon elections

Following the recent elections in Cameroon, the Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

The UK congratulates President Paul Biya on his re-election.

We remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Anglophone regions, which continue to suffer from high levels of violence and human rights abuses perpetrated by both security forces and armed separatists. The UK calls on the Government of Cameroon to now take urgent action to address the crisis in the Anglophone regions.

We hope that President Biya will reach out to all sections of Cameroonian society and work to build confidence and trust. It is crucial for all parties to engage in a peaceful and structured process leading to constitutional reforms, as previously set out by the President, and avoid excessive use of force.

The UK is concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation in the Anglophone regions and the impact this is having on the lives of ordinary people. We call on all parties to grant full and unhindered humanitarian access to the affected population.

The UK will continue to work alongside the international community to encourage and support efforts to resolve the Anglophone crisis. It is vital that all parties now work together to secure a peaceful future for all Cameroonians.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Harriett Baldwin on Twitter [@hbaldwin](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)

Media enquiries

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[Press release: Regulator publishes Statistical Data Return 2017 to 2018](#)

Private registered providers of social housing in England have increased the amount of social housing stock that they own, and undertaken a large volume of transfer activity during the year, according to the Statistical Data Return 2017-2018, published today (23 October 2018) by the Regulator of Social Housing.

These national statistics are collated from annual returns submitted by private registered providers of social housing in England.

The 258,370 units transferred into providers' stock this year, the highest amount ever recorded in the SDR, have been driven by providers modifying their group structures through mergers or restructuring. With no Large Scale Voluntary Transfers of local authority stock having taken place this year, there were no major additions to stock from outside of the PRP sector.

Trends in this year's SDR figures include:

- PRPs reported an increase of 1.1% from 2017 in the amount of social housing stock that they own (2,812,320 units/bedspaces) compared with the 0.7% growth seen between 2016 and 2017
- The average net rent (£96.33 per week) for general needs stock owned by large PRPs shows a -0.3% reduction on 2017. The lower reduction in rents reported in 2018 as compared to last year is likely to be as a result of changes to the way in which temporary social housing has been captured in the 2018 data. When the temporary social housing unit data is excluded from the analysis the data indicates a reduction in rents of -1.1% from the previous year.
- The average net rent (£90.08 per week) for supported housing / housing for older people stock owned by large PRPs sees an increase of 2.0% on the previous year. A significant proportion of the increase is driven by a small number of PRPs operating a lease-based supported housing business model, many of which did not appear in the 2017 rent data due to owning fewer than 1,000 units. When these providers' data are excluded from the analysis the increase in supported housing rents is 0.2% on last year.

Fiona MacGregor, Chief Executive of RSH said:

The Statistical Data Return provides a comprehensive picture of how the social housing sector is changing as it grows. We hope that the analysis that we provide supports stakeholders to gain an understanding of key trends in the sector. Publishing analysis of regulatory data is fundamental to our commitment to transparency and delivering our objective to maintain confidence in the regulation of providers of social housing.

The regulator collects data on stock type, size, rent and location of social housing stock at 31 March each year, and data on sales and acquisitions made between 1 April and 31 March. The information is used to inform its risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation and to help a range of stakeholders better understand the housing association market.

The regulator's Statistical Data Return 2017 to 2018 is available on the [RSH website](#) along with the SDR data set. RSH has also introduced provider level and geographic (local authority) level look-up tools for user-friendly access to the underlying data.

Further information

1. The annual releases are available on the [Statistical Data Return statistical releases collections page](#).
2. These national statistics are collated from an annual survey of private registered providers of social housing in England – the Statistical Data Return. In 2017-18 the overall response rate was 95%, with 100% of registered providers who own 1,000 or more units/bedspaces (including Affordable Rent units) completing the return.
3. A total of 1,432 providers completed this year's Return – although this was the same number as 2017 it comprises changes in the structure of the sector, such as mergers, new registrations and some PRPs now becoming larger providers.
4. The SDR publication consists of a statistical release document, additional tables, a full data spreadsheet, full data set zip file, data quality report, and a pre-release access list. It also includes newly introduced provider level and geographic (Local Authority) level look-up tools and a list of registered providers who did not submit a return in 2018 within the timeframes required.
5. Figures do not include non-social housing units built by unregistered entities within PRP groups, which are outside the scope of the SDR.

6. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants. For more information visit the [RSH website](#).

7. See our [Media enquiries page](#) for press office contact details. For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.