

The week in review

Welcome back to our week in review – we hope you enjoyed Easter.

This week, Ministers announced plans to extend an innovative community sentence project tackling domestic abuse, greater support for victims of crime, including families of murder victims, and support for an innovative outdoor learning residential and urban community-based project. We also saw a step forward in correcting the injustice of gay men convicted under historical discriminatory laws.

Tackling domestic abuse

The Caledonian System has been successfully rehabilitating male perpetrators of domestic abuse in some parts of Scotland for a number of years.

✘ Evidence from a recent evaluation of specialist court-mandated programme has shown that the men who complete the programme pose a lower risk to partners, children and others by the end of the programme. Women have also reported that they felt safer.

This week, Justice Secretary Michael Matheson confirmed that local authorities could bid for an additional £2.8 million to implement the programme in their area. He made the announcement in Edinburgh while viewing training for the programme being delivered to Edinburgh social workers. He said:

“Levels of domestic abuse remain at unacceptably high levels in Scotland. We know that the official statistics still do not paint the whole picture, as victims are often too afraid to report abuse. We also know domestic abuse disproportionately affects women, with men as the primary perpetrators.

“This funding will further strengthen our push to eradicate this scourge on society. Domestic abuse offenders need to understand the harm they cause and what they can do to change their behaviour.”

You can read more about the Caledonian System, its evaluation and the funding on [the main Scottish Government website](#).

Pardons for gay men

The Historical Sexual Offences (Pardons and Disregards) Bill passed its first hurdle in the Scottish Parliament this week as the chamber unanimously approved it in principle.

It will provide gay men convicted under historical discriminatory laws for acts that are now legal with an automatic pardon, and also enable men to have convictions those convictions removed from central criminal conviction records.

Mr Matheson said:

“I am under no illusions that this bill, or any other legislation, can itself right the massive injustice caused by these discriminatory laws that criminalised the act of loving another adult. However, the pardon will send a clear message to those who were affected by them that these laws were unjust. And through the establishment of a disregards scheme, we can ensure that people do not continue to suffer discrimination as a result of such convictions being disclosed to potential employers or when applying to be a volunteer.


“Scotland has come a long way in a relatively short period of time in progressing towards LGBTI equality but there is more to do. This bill complements the Scottish Government’s on-going work to tackle bullying, prejudice and discrimination and provide protections against bigotry and hatred.”

Justice Secretary [@MathesonMichael](#) has opened the stage one debate on the Historical Sexual Offences (Pardons and Disregards) (Scotland) Bill in [@ScotParl](#) [#LGBTI](#) [#Equality](#) pic.twitter.com/vpXouBrVKr

– ScotGov Justice (@ScotGovJustice) [April 18, 2018](#)

New homicide service

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) has been awarded £13.8 million over three years, part of which will provide for a new homicide service giving families of murder victims access to a dedicated case worker and continuous support.

 Mr Matheson announced the funding on a visit to VSS in Edinburgh where he met the charity’s chief executive, Kate Wallace, and Bea Jones, founder of The Moira Fund and mother of Moira Jones who was murdered in Queens Park, Glasgow in 2008.

Welcoming the new service, Bea Jones said:

“This is an important step and one which will have a positive impact on many lives in Scotland. It will ensure more families will be helped than before, and that those families will get the right support, at the right time and from the right people. I’m pleased that in Moira’s name her charity has played a part in bringing about today’s news and that it enriches her legacy.”

[You can read more on the main Scottish Government site.](#)

Mark Scott Leadership for Life Awards

On Wednesday evening, Minister for Community Safety Annabelle Ewing attended the Mark Scott Leadership for Life Awards ceremony to celebrate the achievements of 170 of the country's talented young people.

The Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award brings together 56 pupils from across the Scotland's central belt and from different social, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds – working together to deliver projects that benefit their local communities.

Addressing the event, the Minister congratulated families, school champions, charity funders and organisers, as well as the young people themselves – before announcing £75,000 of further Scottish Government funding to support the Awards through to 2019.

She said: “What makes these awards especially valuable, in my view is that they are focussed on building communities as well as on empowering individuals. Firstly, the community projects themselves help to make local communities & neighbourhoods better places in which to live and interact.

“And secondly, the awards encourage greater understanding and tolerance by bringing together people from different backgrounds. The awards create bonds of friendship, co-operation and understanding which last a lifetime.”

You can read more reactions from Wednesday's ceremony via the [#MSLFL](#) hashtag on Twitter – and learn about the project, run by the Outward Bound Trust, on the [Award website](#).

Congratulations to all the young people who completed The Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award. In particular a massive well done to our very own Deklyn, Morgan and Jack – what an amazing achievement! [@MSLFLAward pic.twitter.com/iT7ekGgjTd](#)

– Drumchapel High (@drumchapelhigh) [April 18, 2018](#)

New police powers

New measures to combat organised crime are now in force, meaning that betting slips, casino chips and gaming vouchers can now be seized by Police Scotland as if they were currency.

The provisions from the Criminal Finances Act 2017 also mean that items of value such as jewellery, watches, stamps and precious stones where they are suspected of being involved in illegal activity, can be searched for the same way as cash.

Michael Matheson said: “This is a significant step in ensuring criminals cannot profit from unlawful activities and gives our law enforcement agencies

additional powers to seize assets acquired by illegal means.

“More than £6 million was recovered by the Crown Office and the Civil Recovery Unit in 2017/18. However, expanding the definition of what can be treated as cash and what our police officers can search for as they seek to disrupt criminal activity has the potential to further impact Scottish organised crime. There must be no respite in tackling organised crime and the harm it causes.”

In case you missed it

While Parliament was away for Easter recess, there was still plenty happening across Scotland’s justice system.

On Easter Monday the Justice Secretary announced that [Migrant Help and TARA will share £3,113,352 over three years](#) to increase the care they can provide to victims of **human trafficking** on the day that regulations to increase the minimum period of support for trafficking victims to 90 days came into force.

A [consultation on a statutory appropriate adult service](#) to assist vulnerable people in contact with the police was launched on the third of April. Michael Matheson highlighted the need for vulnerable people with communication needs to receive the support they require during police procedures as part of the launch.

Michael Matheson also met Police Scotland officers responsible for planning the operation around last weekend’s **Scottish Cup semi-finals**. The force put significant resource in ensuring public safety and both games passed off without serious incident.

The post [The week in review](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).