

The week in review

The week's round-up includes new research into local experiences and wider public perceptions of serious organised crime, an independent review into the impact of policing the 1980s miners' strike on communities, and Parliament's unanimous approval for legislation delivering an automatic pardon for historical convictions for homosexuality.

(Thanks to Anna Davidson who visited the Justice comms desk this week, for assisting with preparing this week's round-up blog.)

Communities tell of organised crime impact

✘ The changing face of serious organised crime (SOC), its impact in communities and the potential for local services to prevent exploitation, were highlighted in [research published on Monday](#).

An 18-month study, which found that the harmful consequences of the illicit drugs market remains the primary area of concern, also identified the range of ways that SOC adversely affects people's lives. The research highlighted good practice and made recommendations to enhance Scotland's collective response to SOC, including strengthening links between local services, particularly housing and social work, to help prevent exploitation of vulnerable residents.

At the same time, an Ipsos MORI survey was published showing a growing awareness that everyone has a role in tackling the issue, as well as revealing that one-in-ten had personally been affected by SOC in the past three years.

You can find out more about the work of Scotland's Serious Organised Taskforce and actions of its partner organisations to tackle the issue by following the [@SOCTaskforce Twitter account](#) launched this week.


Pardon for gay and bisexual men

Gay and bisexual men in Scotland are to receive automatic pardons for historical convictions for homosexuality following a debate and unanimous vote in Parliament on Wednesday.

MSPs passed legislation that provides an automatic pardon for those convicted of criminal offences for engaging in same-sex sexual activity which is now legal. It will also create a system to allow anyone with such a conviction to apply to have it "disregarded" so it is removed from public records and no longer appears on a disclosure check.


The [Historical Sexual Offences \(Pardons and Disregards\) Bill](#) was introduced to Parliament by Justice Secretary Michael Matheson in November last year, when the [First Minister also made an unqualified apology](#) to those men convicted before 2001 under discriminatory laws.

After Parliament passed the legislation on Wednesday, Director of the Equality Network Tim Hopkins said: "This is concrete recognition of the huge harm that was done to people who were prosecuted or lived under these old laws. Together with the First Minister's apology, the message is that Scotland has changed for good, and that discrimination is no longer acceptable." Read more on the [main Scottish Government website](#).

 "Scotland has come a long way in a relatively short period of time progressing towards LGBTI equality, but we know there is more to do. This bill stands alongside our on-going work to tackle discrimination." [@MathesonMichael](#)
[#loveislove](#) [#pride](#) [#LGBTI](#) pic.twitter.com/yR1o0BlHxF

– Scottish Government (@scotgov) [June 6, 2018](#)

Minister leads debate on hate crime

 On Thursday Minister for Community Safety Annabelle Ewing led a debate in Parliament to hear MSPs' initial views of the report of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, published a week earlier.

Lord Bracadale, who led the review, published [a full report](#) with more than 20 recommendations and a [summary leaflet](#). Ministers have agreed to the proposal to consolidate Scotland's hate crime laws into a single piece of legislation and will arrange a public consultation to inform the development of that new Act, fit for the 21st century.

Ms Ewing said: "The publication of Lord Bracadale's report marks an important stage in this process in which we are all engaged. While legislation on its own will not solve hate crime, a good, substantive law will certainly be at the heart of our efforts to build a country in which everyone – regardless of background – feels valued, respected and at home."

Reviewing impact of policing of Miners' Strike

On Thursday the Justice Secretary announced plans for an Independent Review into the impact of policing on communities during the miners' strike from March 1984 to March 1985.

The review will be led by John Scott QC Solicitor Advocate, working with an advisory panel comprising former MSP Dennis Canavan, former Assistant Chief Constable Kate Thomson and Professor Jim Murdoch of the University of Glasgow.

Mr Matheson said "This represented an extremely turbulent and difficult time for many mining communities in Scotland. And although more than three decades have passed, the feelings and scars from that time run deep and there are questions that still need to be answered."

The Justice Secretary has also written to the Home Secretary, again urging him to consider establishing a UK-wide investigation which would be necessary to fully explore concerns about the role of the then UK Government during the strike.

Read more about Scotland's independent review on the [main Scottish Government website](#) or watch Mr Matheson's Parliamentary statement on the video below.

New Chief Inspector of Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Simon Routh-Jones, a former fire officer who served 37 years before joining HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) as an assistant inspector in 2016, has been appointed as the new HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service. He will replace Martyn Emberson, who has served in the role for over two years.

[Announcing the appointment](#), Minister for Community Safety Annabelle Ewing said: "Simon brings a huge breadth of experience in fire and rescue and with his history of strategic and innovative thinking his appointment brings continuity to the Inspectorate, which has independent oversight of one of our vital public services.

"I would also like to record my sincere thanks to Martyn Emberson for his dedicated service as Chief Inspector and for his advice and wise counsel. He can be proud of the positive impact he has had and I wish him all the very best in his retirement."

Simon Routh-Jones QFSM, FIFireE, FCMI has been appointed Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Simon is looking forward to taking the team forward providing independent, risk based and proportionate professional inspection of the Scottish Fire Service. pic.twitter.com/Jp9Ca0l3Ay

– HMFSI (@HMFSI_Scotland) [June 7, 2018](#)

Inspectorates to review home detention curfew processes

The Justice Secretary this week instructed the Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Chief Inspector of Constabulary to review processes surrounding Home Detention Curfew (HDC), which allows some prisoners, mainly serving shorter sentences, to serve part of the sentence period in the community subject to licence conditions, including wearing an electronic tag and remaining at home during certain hours.

A person is only eligible for HDC if they are assessed to be at low risk of

reoffending, while certain categories are automatically excluded, including prisoners subject to an extended sentence or any prisoner who is required to register as a sex offender.

Mr Matheson ordered the independent assurance review following the life sentencing of a man for a murder carried out while he was unlawfully-at-large following a breach of the terms of his HDC which had been granted while he was serving a prison sentence for knife possession. The Inspectorates will consider how prisoners are assessed before being granted HDC and also review the processes for investigating breaches of HDC terms and apprehending individuals when that happens.

Mr Matheson announced the review as he gave evidence to the Justice Committee on the [Management of Offenders Bill](#), which aims to improve how the justice system safeguards the public while helping rehabilitate people with convictions. The legislation includes provisions to extend the range of areas where electronic monitoring may be used, including for public protection – for example: in sentencing, as part of the requirement options in a Community Payback Order; in prisoner management for home leave; and alongside a sexual offences prevention order, which is a civil protective order. The Bill will also enable GPS technology to be used with tags, where appropriate, as an alternative to current radio frequency technology – enabling the use of exclusion zones.

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