

[Week in review](#)

This week's round-up includes news of greater public awareness of human trafficking in Scotland, the latest independent assurance on police call-handling improvements, and the appointment of a new independent inspector for the country's prisons.

Growing public awareness of human trafficking

✘ A survey published this week highlighted growing public awareness of human trafficking in Scotland with an increasing number of Scots being prepared to report related suspicious activity to police.

A total of 87% of people questioned said they would be prepared to report any suspicions of human trafficking to Police Scotland. This is up from 80% in 2017 and follows a significant [Scottish Government campaign](#) to raise awareness of trafficking, launched last summer.

Other survey findings include an increased awareness that trafficking activity can take place in areas such as farming and the beauty industry – and that it isn't simply related to prostitution or drug trafficking.

[Justice Secretary Michael Matheson commented](#): “Such appalling abuses of human rights must stop and we are continuing to make Scotland a hostile environment for traffickers, including giving Police Scotland the power to ban suspects from a range of activities.”

Read more about what the Scottish Government is doing to help tackle trafficking and ensure victims get the help they need – and find links to further information and details of how to report concerns – on the [main Scottish Government website](#).

Victims' voices sought on sexual crimes

Research into the experiences of rape and sexual assault victim-survivors are to help ensure the interests of victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system, the Justice Secretary announced this week.

The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR) has been appointed to help identify and understand the range of factors that affect whether individuals who experience rape and sexual assault choose to engage with the criminal justice process. Researchers will also consider how the system can support victims to give their evidence in the best way.

Mr Matheson said: “Listening to the views of survivors of rape and sexual assault is so important and I am humbled by the courage of those who are prepared to speak out where the system is not delivering for their needs. Going through the justice process can be a daunting experience and I am determined that we do more so that all stages are victim-centred and trauma-informed.”

The research team will be led by Dr Oona Brooks-Hay, lecturer in Criminology at SCCJR, University of Glasgow. Their findings are due to be published in early 2019 – contributing to Ministers’ key agenda of strengthening support for victims of crime.

In [March Mr Matheson announced £1.7 million funding to extend the National Advocacy Project](#) – delivered by Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) to support victims – to allow extra advocacy workers to be recruited in areas of most demand and provide additional capacity for RCS to support and co-ordinate the service nationally.

Read more about the new research project on the [main Scottish Government website](#).

It’s important we hear directly from rape survivors about their experience of the justice process, good & bad, in order to improve how support is provided throughout the process.

<https://t.co/XlSGZY4ihL>

– Michael Matheson MSP (@MathesonMichael) [May 23, 2018](#)

Police call handling

✘ In Parliament on Tuesday the Justice Secretary welcomed an independent report, published that morning by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland detailing improvements to police call handling.

The report, [published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary](#), follows an independent review of police call handling systems directed by Mr Matheson in 2015.

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary Gillian Imery said: “Throughout a challenging period of intensive change and development, the management and staff in Contact, Command and Control (C3) division in Police Scotland have continued to be strongly committed to providing a good service to the public. A number of key milestones have been achieved, staff morale and confidence has improved and performance has stabilised. However there are still some areas where further progress is required.”

Watch Michael Matheson’s statement to Parliament responding to the HMICS report on the [Scottish Parliament’s YouTube channel](#).

Parliament debates Restorative Justice

✘ Also on Tuesday, Minister for Community Safety & Legal Affairs Annabelle Ewing outlined plans to support the local delivery of restorative justice by consulting later this year on new regulations, under victims and witnesses legislation.

The Government published a [restorative justice guidance document](#) last year and has recently surveyed local authorities to better understand how RJ is currently being delivered.

Restorative justice (RJ) is a process of independent, facilitated contact which supports constructive dialogue between a victim and the person responsible – or alleged to be responsible – for the harm caused. RJ gives victims the chance to explain the impact the crime has had on their lives. This has the potential to help some victims by giving them a voice within a safe and supportive setting and giving them a sense of closure.

Ms Ewing told MSPs: “Restorative justice can provide victims with the chance to have their voices heard and their questions answered. It can also help to tackle the likelihood of someone being drawn into further offending. It is a particularly powerful tool when it is used to address the behaviour of young people, who can learn so much from a dialogue with those who have been harmed by their actions. That can lead them to a route out of crime and away from the revolving door of the justice system. However, we are keen that the main benefit is felt by the victims of crime, giving them an opportunity to communicate the impact on their lives and to regain some control.”

Employers’ new bid to provide second chances

✘ This week saw the launch of a new business-led partnership aimed at unlocking the potential of people with criminal convictions.

And estimated one in three men and some one in ten women in Scotland are estimated to have a criminal conviction.

[Release Scotland](#) has been set up by employers who have seen the benefits of recruiting people with convictions, with the new network providing a one-stop shop for other businesses in Scotland seeking advice and help to do the same themselves.

The Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Virgin Trains, Greggs, Timpson and Reed Global are among those behind the new initiative, which was formally launched at the Parliament this week.

Finance Secretary Derek Mackay, who addressed the launch on behalf of the Scottish Government, emphasised ministers’ commitment to helping more men and women with a criminal record to turn their lives around and gain employment.

“There are clear social and economic benefits to helping people with convictions move on and play a positive role in helping Scotland’s economy flourish. Through the ‘[Scotland Works for You](#)’ initiative, we aim to help people with convictions attain the benefits that work brings for reducing reoffending and also, for employers, in finding loyal and dedicated staff.”

Visit the [Release Scotland website](#) to find out more about the initiative, including advice, employer testimonies and individual case studies – or follow [@releasescotland on Twitter](#).

New Prisons Inspection chief

✘ This week saw Wendy Sinclair-Gieben announced as the new HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland – the first woman appointed to the role.

Ms Sinclair-Gieben – succeeding David Strang, who has served in the role since 2013 – has a background in justice in the UK and Australia, including terms as a prison governor and managing a reintegration facility.

Ms Sinclair-Gieben said: “I am delighted to be appointed to this exciting post. I see this role as a culmination of a long and rewarding career in Justice and I particularly look forward to building on my predecessor’s significant achievements in the future.”

[Mr Matheson commented](#): “Wendy Sinclair-Gieben brings a wealth of experience in the justice sector, a deep understanding of prisons and the wider justice context, and a commitment to a public sector ethos. I look forward to working with her.”

Read more about the role of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland on the [Inspectorate website](#).

And finally...

Keep an eye out this coming Monday for BBC1’s [Countryfile Diaries](#), which will feature the excellent [Dementia Dog](#) project, working with the Scottish Prison Service and students at HM Prison Castle Huntly. On Tuesday Minister for Mental Health Maureen Watt visited Castle Huntly to see first-hand the project, which is Scotland’s first prison-based assistance dog training programme.

Tune in to BBC1 Countryfile Diaries on Monday 28th May [@9am](#) for an insight into the innovative partnership with our students at HMP Castle Huntly [@dementiadog](#) [@DogsForGoodUK](#) [@PawsforProgress](#) [@fifecollege](#) pic.twitter.com/w71dpvwBUz

– ScotsPrisonService (@scottishprisons) [May 25, 2018](#)

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