

Justice Secretary comments on homicide figures

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf has responded to the publication of the [latest official figures](#) showing there were 60 cases of homicide in 2018-19 – the third lowest level since 1976.

 Mr Yousaf said:

“While the number of homicides in Scotland is significantly lower than a decade ago – in line with the overall fall in crime – any death is one too many. Behind these figures are grieving families and friends and my sincere sympathies go out to all those who have lost a loved one.

“We are working to ensure that victims’ interests are at the heart of our criminal justice system and we recognise the enormous trauma experienced by families bereaved by murder and culpable homicide.

“As part of more than £18 million invested annually to improve support, advice and information for all victims of crime, we have funded Victim Support Scotland to deliver a free and confidential new caseworker support service for families bereaved by crime.

“We are determined to help people break free from cycles of violence. We will continue our efforts to drive down violent crime, both through education and enforcement, supporting prevention work with people of all ages and ensuring Scotland’s law enforcement agencies and courts have the resources to deal with those who harm others.”

The Scottish Government has provided £1.2 million funding over three years to establish the [Support for Families Bereaved by Crime](#) service. It will ensure all families affected by homicide have a dedicated case worker to provide support and information at every stage of the criminal justice process.

Over the last ten years, the Scottish Government has invested around £20 million in violence prevention including:

The [Scottish Violence Reduction Unit \(SVRU\)](#) – a national centre of expertise on violence. Supported by the Scottish Government, the SVRU has adopted a public health approach, treating violence as an infection which can be

prevented and cured. The SVRU aims to reduce violent crime and behaviour by working with partner agencies to achieve long-term societal and attitudinal change, and, by focusing on enforcement, to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who are involved in violent behaviour.

[Navigators Programme](#) – aims to interrupt violence by identifying and supporting people within the Emergency Department (ED) or ward at the point and time of need. The programme started at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary in December 2015 and was rolled out further to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in 2017 and into Queen Elizabeth hospital in Glasgow and Cross House Hospital in the later part of 2018.

[Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme](#) – developed by the SVRU and is now led by Education Scotland, to promote positive relationships through health and wellbeing for young people in schools across Scotland. MVP Scotland is a bystander programme which aims to empower young people to safely challenge and speak out against gender based violence, including bullying, abusive and violent behaviour, as well as the negative attitudes and assumptions which underpin this behaviour.

[Medics Against Violence \(MAV\)](#) – set up a decade ago by three surgeons who dealt every day with the devastating consequences of violence. MAV deliver training to professionals and students to spot the signs of domestic abuse and refer people onto support services. MAV also works to prevent violence through education and deliver a secondary school programme, where MAV volunteers, who are all NHS professionals, work with local schools, going into classrooms and speaking directly to young people about how to avoid violent situations and stay safe.

[No Knives, Better Lives](#) – a youth engagement programme which aims to target young people aged 11-18 years, on the cusp of picking up a knife, to reduce the incidence of violence and knife carrying amongst young people. The programme raises awareness of the potentially devastating risks and consequences associated with carrying a knife and encourages young people to make positive life choices.

[Police Scotland Youth Volunteers](#) – seeks to deepen police engagement with young people, breaking down barriers with traditionally difficult to engage communities and promote positive role models. PSYV provides young people aged 13-18 with the opportunity to gain confidence and develop leadership skills by working with Police Scotland and volunteering in their local community.

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