

# Justice Secretary comments on homicide figures



Commenting on today's publication of Homicide in Scotland 2017-18, Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf said:

"While the number of homicides in Scotland has fallen this year and has reduced significantly over the last 10 years, one 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 recognise the enormous trauma experienced by families bereaved by murder and culpable homicide. That is why we are currently funding Victim Support Scotland to develop and deliver a bespoke service for these families, ensuring dedicated and continuous support.

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

## **Background**

The Scottish Government continues to invest in the National Violence Reduction Unit – investing over £12 million since 2008. This includes delivery of the Mentors in Violence Prevention Programme working in 23 local authorities, and the Medics Against Violence work which includes training professionals such as dentists, doctors, vets, fire fighters and hairdressers across the country to recognise signs of domestic abuse and offer support and guidance to victims.

The Scottish Government has since 2009, also invested over £3.6 million in the No Knives Better Lives – a programme that aims to reduce incidences of violence and knife possession among young people by raising awareness of the potentially devastating risks and consequences of carrying a knife, and encouraging young people to make positive life choices. This year will see the delivery of the NKBLs Balisong Play in schools across every local authority across Scotland. The Balisong play is a unique and powerful way to engage and open up discussions with young people about the risks and consequences of carrying a knife and the challenge of speaking up in situations where other people might be at risk.

People who are convicted of a non-sexual crime of violence in the Scottish courts are now more likely to receive a custodial sentence than they were 10 years ago. The average custodial sentence length for handling offensive weapons has almost doubled over the last ten years, from 218 days in 2007-08 to 391 days in 2016-17.

Scottish courts have the power and discretion to sentence up to a maximum of five years in prison if convicted of carrying a knife in public, up to life imprisonment for anyone convicted of assault with an offensive weapon, and an automatic life sentence for an offender convicted of knife murder.

Access the full statistical publication:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/2018/10/1417>

Access the statistical news release:  
<https://news.gov.scot/news/homicide-in-scotland-2017-18>

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