

Justice Committee

Civil actions for rape and other serious crimes

Written submission from Police Scotland

In relation to the request from the Justice Committee dated 17th January 2018, regarding details of the support available to victims of rape and other serious crimes where there is no criminal prosecution, please find below information on a police response in those circumstances.

All victims who report a crime of rape or other serious offence will receive a high standard of support, regardless of the sufficiency of evidence to charge or if a suspect/accused has been identified that would result in a report to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).

Rape and Sexual Crime

Police Scotland are committed to supporting victims of rape and sexual offences throughout the investigation irrespective of its outcome leading to a prosecution or not.

It is appreciated how difficult it can be to report sexual crime and since 2009 national training has been delivered for specially trained officers, Sexual Offences Liaison Officers (SOLOs) who support victims through all stages of their investigation from initial engagement until the enquiry is concluded.

SOLO officers will also make themselves available to discuss, support and help victims to understand Police and other judicial processes including where the matter may or not be reported to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

Police Scotland also refer victims to other support services, including Rape Crisis Scotland to receive additional support and advocacy services, during the investigation and this continues long after the enquiry has been concluded.

Police Scotland also offer referrals, where appropriate and whether there is a prosecution or not, to the following support organisations:

- Scottish Women's Aid
- Shakti
- Hermat Gryffe
- Scottish Women's Rights Centre
- Victim Support Scotland

Details of this support and other useful information are captured in the Scottish Government publication, 'Information and help after rape and sexual assault'.

Other Serious Crime

Other serious crimes could include a number of offences and the support offered can be through referrals to Victim Support Scotland or on some occasions to other specialist support.

For homicide investigations, dedicated Family Liaison Officers will be deployed and can also refer and signpost bereaved families to support services. Similar to the publication produced for Rape and sexual crime victims, the Scottish government also produce 'Information for bereaved family and friends following murder or culpable homicide.' This is a helpful guide and also provides details of support available, whether there is a prosecution or not.

In cases of Rape and Sexual Crime or other serious crime, where a report is submitted to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and a prosecution is considered, the support and information to victims is facilitated by the Victim Information and Advice Service (VIA) provided by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. This is to allow the decisions on prosecutions and up to date information on the judicial process to be given to the victim by those who are processing the case but also make the decisions in relation to prosecution. This process is supported by the police who provide a victim strategy to VIA in order that contact can be maintained once the matter has left the police investigation stage and is with COPFS.

Police Scotland
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