

**Scottish
Sentencing
Council**



9TH EDITION - JULY 2026
Spotlight on Sentencing Circular

Welcome from the Council's Communications and Engagement Committee



Welcome to the ninth edition of the Spotlight on Sentencing Circular (SSC).

The Council has had a busy few months, with the launch of our [public consultation on a draft sentencing guideline](#) for domestic abuse in May. The consultation will close on Thursday 6 August, so please share your views.

The Council also released a new educational video on [the sentencing process](#). This shows a fictional but realistic court case and takes viewers through the steps judges follow in reaching a sentencing decision. Viewers are then offered the chance to decide what sentence they would give if they were the judge.

In May, the Council published a blog from [the Parole Board for Scotland](#) providing an insight into its work and how decisions are made. This was followed in June by a blog from our head of communications and engagement, Victoria Weldon, who provided a look into the work of [the Female Offenders Court](#) in Glasgow.

We also welcomed [Sheriff Frances McCartney](#) as our new sheriff member to the Council. Sheriff McCartney replaces Sheriff Iain Fleming, who completed his five-year term. We thank Sheriff Fleming for all his valuable work and the expertise he provided to the Council during his term.

You can read more about our recent work below and, as always, stay updated on our latest news and information via our social media channels and [website](#).

Latest News



Public consultation on draft domestic abuse guideline **Share your views before 6 August**

The Council is holding a public consultation on a draft sentencing guideline for domestic abuse offences.

The public consultation, which closes on 6 August, is a vital stage in developing a sentencing guideline. Organisations and people from all backgrounds, legal or otherwise, are encouraged to have their say.

Domestic abuse is an area of great concern to the public and accounts for a significant number of cases across courts in Scotland. The sentencing of such cases is complex and can prove challenging for judges, particularly due to the broad range of circumstances involved in domestic offending and the need to give careful consideration to the protection of victims.

Lord Beckett, Lord Justice Clerk and Chair of the Council, said: “This guideline will assist the court in arriving at what can sometimes be challenging sentencing decisions, thereby enhancing consistency.

“It will also aid public awareness by helping people better understand what domestic abuse can involve, and what is considered by the courts when reaching a sentence.”

All responses will be carefully considered before the guideline is finalised and submitted to the High Court for approval.

[Read more about the public consultation](#)



Council releases new video on the sentencing process in Scotland

A new video commissioned by the Council is providing an insight into the sentencing process in Scottish Courts.

[The sentencing process video](#) sets out the steps judges follow in deciding a sentence and features interviews with justice experts including Sheriff David Young KC, prosecutor Alex Prentice KC, solicitor Julia McPartlin, Kerry Knox from Victim Support Scotland, and Professor Beth Weaver from the University of Strathclyde.

The video takes viewers through the different elements of a fictional but realistic case, before directing them to a questionnaire asking what sentence they would give the offender. More information about what factors might be considered in reaching the sentencing decision can be found on a [dedicated webpage](#).

The video is designed to help the public better understand how sentencing works in Scotland, explaining how courts arrive at sentencing decisions and what may be taken into account, such as the seriousness of the offence and any aggravating or mitigating factors.

The steps discussed in the video are outlined in the Council's guideline on [the sentencing process](#), which was approved by the High Court and applies to all offenders who are sentenced on or after 22 September 2021.

The film is the third in a series on sentencing commissioned as part of the Council's online information resources. The first two in the series are on community sentencing and custodial sentences and are available to [watch on our website](#).

[Watch our sentencing process video](#)



New sheriff member appointed

The Lord Justice General has appointed Sheriff Frances McCartney as [the new sheriff member](#) of the Council.

Sheriff McCartney has served in Dumbarton Sheriff Court since 2018, presiding over solemn and civil courts.

She is a temporary judge, a judge of the Upper Tribunal for Scotland and a member of the Scottish Civil Justice Council.

Sheriff McCartney will join the Council for a five-year term and replaces Sheriff Iain Fleming, who completed his term with the Council earlier this year.

Lord Beckett, Lord Justice Clerk and Chair of the Council, said: "I am very pleased to welcome Sheriff McCartney to the Council.

"Sheriff McCartney brings a wealth of experience, both as a solicitor and a sheriff, and her in-depth knowledge and expertise in criminal law, as well as her work on the treatment of vulnerable court users, will be extremely helpful to the Council.

"I would like to extend my thanks to the Council's former sheriff member, Sheriff Iain Fleming, who contributed to much during his time with us. In particular, his input to the Council's research work and development of sentencing guidelines on environmental offences, and on sentencing after a guilty plea, has been invaluable."



Council attends engagement events

Members of the Council's secretariat attended a number of events over the last month to promote the work of the Council and raise awareness and understanding of sentencing in Scotland. We attended Civil Service Live in Edinburgh, which brought civil servants from all government departments and agencies together. The event offered the opportunity to build relationships with others working in criminal justice and share learnings.

The team also attended the Children & Young People's Centre for Justice conference where we went to workshops and talks centred around the theme of diversity, inequality and justice. We hosted a stand offering the opportunity to interact with others working in the criminal justice sector and to discuss the Council's work relating to young people and the law.

Council advisor becomes Senator

Council advisor Sheriff Principal Aisha Anwar KC has been appointed by His Majesty the King to the Office of Senator of the College of Justice.

Sheriff Principal Anwar will take up the appointment on 24 August 2026 and will hear a wide range of important civil and criminal business in the Supreme Courts of Scotland.



Publications and research

Scottish Sentencing Council Ten-year anniversary conference report

Conference hosted on 10 November 2025
Report published June 2026

Council publishes report to mark its ten-year anniversary

The Scottish Sentencing Council has published a report on its [ten-year anniversary conference](#). The event, held in November last year, brought together members of the judiciary, criminal justice leaders, practitioners, policy makers, academics and third-sector organisations to discuss the role of sentencing within Scotland's justice system and address evolving challenges.

The report reflects on the work of the Council in its first decade, including key achievements and lessons learned, while providing valuable insights intended to support its next stage of work.

The publishing of the report coincides with the May 2026 edition of the [Edinburgh Law Review](#), which features essays from a number of attendees and speakers at the conference on discussions that took place.

The Council is grateful to all those who attended the event and offered their time and expertise. Following the report, the Council will use the feedback and recommendations highlighted to shape its work in promoting consistency in sentencing, supporting informed and effective policy making and contributing to improved public understanding of sentencing in Scotland.

[Read the full report](#)

Spotlight on sentencing blogs

Understanding the role of the Parole Board for Scotland

The Parole Board for Scotland plays a vital role in the justice system, balancing public safety with the rehabilitation of offenders.

The Board operates as a court, albeit it sits outside the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, and its decisions are entirely independent of Scottish Ministers. The Board's decisions have a profound impact on individuals, families, and communities across the country.

Our guest blog from the Parole Board's Chief Executive, Colin Spivey, and Interim Chairperson, Ian Bryce, provides an insight into its works and how decisions are made.

[Read the blog](#)

Inside Glasgow's Female Offender Court



The specialised Female Offender Court at Glasgow Sheriff Court is a problem-solving initiative that deals with women who repeatedly offend, often due to mental health or addiction issues.

Victoria Weldon, head of communications and engagement for the Council, recently visited the court to see how it is attempting to deal with the root causes of offending with the right programmes, support and services.

[Read the blog](#)

Guideline latest

Table of progress

Guideline	Stage 1 - Initial consideration of the guideline topic	Stage 2 - Development of a draft guideline	Stage 3 - Seeking the views of judges	Stage 4 - Consulting on the guideline	Stage 5 - Finalising the guideline	Stage 6 - Submitting the guideline for approval	Stage 7 - Raising awareness about the guideline	Stage 8 - Monitoring and review
Rape	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Domestic abuse	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Sexual assault	✓	✓						
Indecent images of children	✓	✓						
Sentencing after a guilty plea	✓	✓						
Environmental and wildlife crime	✓	✓						
Statutory offences of causing death by driving	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sentencing young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The sentencing process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Principles and purposes of sentencing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[Read more about our guidelines on our website](#)

Minutes from the latest meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting on 12 June 2026 are now available and published on our website.

[Read the minutes from the latest Council meeting](#)



Upcoming meetings

2 October 2026

The next meeting of the Scottish Sentencing Council will take place on Friday 2 October 2026.

Scottish
Sentencing
Council



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL:

