

Murder trial jury still out

JURORS in the trial of a man accused of murdering waiter Surjit Singh Chhokar almost 18 years ago will consider their verdict for a third day.

Ronnie Coulter, 48, is accused of killing Mr Chhokar in Wishaw, North Lanarkshire, on November 4, 1998 and has been on trial at the High Court in Glasgow.

The court has heard Coulter was on trial for the second time after previously being acquitted of the murder in 1999.

The jury have been deliberating since Monday. They failed to reach a verdict yesterday and will resume again today.

Concern for missing girl



CONCERN is growing over the whereabouts of a missing teenager who vanished on Sunday.

Sophie Lindsay was last seen at around 1.15pm in Sherbrooke Avenue, Glasgow.

The 15-year-old is described as 5ft 4ins, of slim build with blue eyes and dyed green hair. She normally wears glasses, and has been known to wear wigs in various styles and colours. When last seen she was wearing dark clothing.

Sergeant David Connor said: "I am anxious to speak to anyone who has seen Sophie since Sunday or anyone who knows of her present whereabouts. She has never been missing for this length of time."

Complaints on NHS drop

COMPLAINTS about the NHS fell by four per cent last year, according to new figures.

A total of 21,456 complaints were received in 2015/16, down from 22,417 the previous year.

The drop was welcomed by Health Secretary Shona Robison.

Official statistics show that in NHS Scotland, five complaints were made for every 10,000 contacts with the service, including hospital admissions, outpatient appointments, A&E attendances, visits to GPs and nurses and dental and ophthalmic treatments.

EVENING TIMES INVESTIGATION... support workers and

System is limiting help to rape victims, say crisis care staff

EXCLUSIVE
By HANNAH RODGER

A PIONEERING scheme set up to encourage survivors of rape to report their experiences is letting down victims after just two years, say staff working on the project.

The Support to Report scheme aims to help more people through the process of talking about rape, reporting it to police and ultimately taking the case to court.

Staff working at Glasgow's Rape Crisis Centre say they have faced challenges with the courts in allowing them to accompany survivors who are giving evidence against their attackers, and have said the scheme is not receiving enough referrals from the police.

They also say they are often seen as a service which "gives people hugs", and are not treated as professionals by members of the police and courts service.

Speaking to the Evening Times, staff said the scheme, which was piloted in Glasgow in 2013 before being rolled out nationally, is not receiving enough referrals from police officers who are contacted by victims of rape.

In a six month period, between April and August this year, police Scotland referred 32 people to Glasgow Rape Crisis. However, in the last 12 months, the Glasgow support to report scheme has received 200 referrals which they say mainly comes from individuals, and from other rape crisis centres.

Cat Storrie, the Support to Report coordinator at Glasgow Rape Crisis, has been working on the project since it was founded.

She said: "The police were supposed to refer to us so we, the advocacy workers, would be present at that time when statements were being made but that isn't happening at all."

"There have been so many cases where the way that it was offered to the survivor, it wasn't encouraging them to come and see us. It came



Rape Crisis Centre staff Angie Hawk, helpline coordinator, Paula Dunn, prevention and education worker, Cat Storrie Support to Report coordinator and Taherah Ali, support and development worker
Pictures: Kirsty Anderson

across like they didn't want the support."

Officers working in Glasgow's rape investigation unit have disagreed and say they offer 100 percent of victims the option of a referral to rape crisis - however they don't always take it.

Craig Willison, Detective Inspector in Glasgow's divisional rape investigation unit said: "As a matter of course, when we get a report of a rape, we ask for the consent of the victim to refer them to Rape Crisis. We will automatically do that, and a lot of the victims take up that referral."

"We pass on their details and rape crisis will make contact with them."

"We deal with victims at a time of crisis, when it is traumatic for them.



Detective Inspector Craig Willison

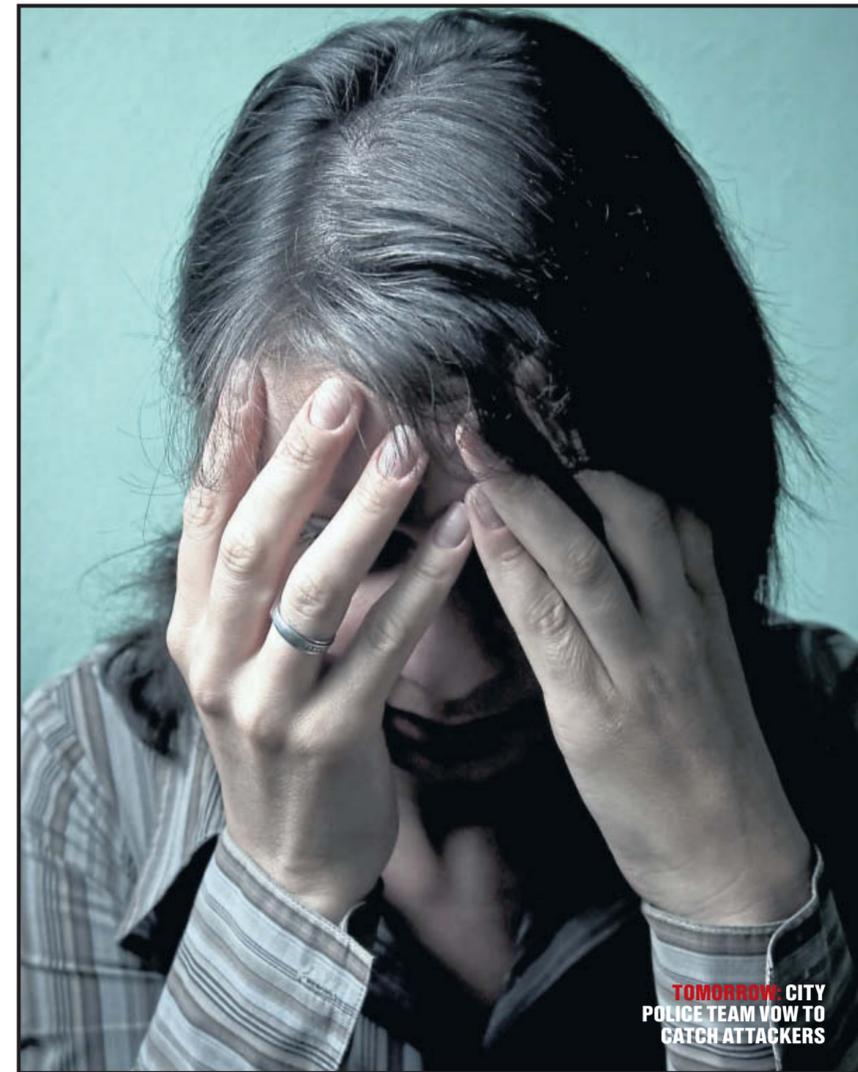
"Sometimes people don't want the referral. If they don't, we check back again in two weeks and then two weeks after that. If the victim is still not ready we can go back later, it's particular to that victim and that case, but we have to have their consent."

Workers on the Support to Report project say they have also had difficulty in being allowed to accompany survivors into court when they have to give evidence against their attackers.

Paula Dunn, who has worked at rape crisis centre for the last 12 years, said victims will give better evidence if they are supported by an advocacy worker who they know.

She said: "The courts are not tak-

cops clash over service to aid survivors



TOMORROW CITY POLICE TEAM VOW TO CATCH ATTACKERS

ing in to consideration that giving evidence is traumatic but particularly so in sexual crimes. The trauma a witness goes through is increased by giving evidence.

"They will give better evidence if they feel they have somebody sitting behind them who knows them, who understands them."

Cat added: "We would usually phone up the procurator fiscal's office, victim support and victim information and would request that we can sit with them."

"We don't talk, we don't do anything. We just literally sit there."

"We are professionals, but we are there for her to know that there is someone who understands what she is feeling."

"I had one case where I had requested my name on the list to be able to support the survivor in court. We went back and forth and the victim information service said yes, but it would be up to the court on the day whether I could sit in with her or not."

"On the day when the case started,

the procurator fiscal said no as I could influence the case, there could be accusations of me prompting the survivor."

"It's really very unfair. We are a professional organisation. We may have some knowledge of the case but often not a lot, we are there to support her."

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal service said they have recently discussed the issues with Rape Crisis and have made changes to ensure staff are allowed to accompany victims into court.

A spokesman said: "Victims of rape and other sexual crime are automatically entitled to certain special measures, namely a support person, a screen or to give evidence by CCTV link, which will allow a witness to give the best possible evidence and to reduce, as far as possible, the anxiety that involvement in court proceedings can raise."

"The primary agency facilitating supporters for witnesses at Court in recent years has been the Victim Sup-

port Scotland, Witness Service. Their volunteers have been comprehensively trained in this role and the Courts are accustomed to dealing with them."

"The Crown have always been open to utilising other agencies if considered best placed to fulfil the role and support a witness in a particular case."

"We have been notified of a number of cases where the Courts displayed reluctance to grant applications for Rape Crisis staff to carry out this role and the Crown have discussed this at a national level with Rape Crisis Scotland and provided an assurance to them that there is no difficulty in principle, or indeed any legal bar, to their Rape Crisis Support and Advocacy Workers facilitating the role of court supporter for victims."

● If you have been a victim of rape, domestic abuse or sexual violence contact the police on 101 or the Glasgow Rape Crisis Centre on 08088 00 00 14

Ofcom rules: 'Hun is not too offensive'

By MARTIN WILLIAMS

CALLING people 'Huns' and a Scot a 'Jock' is of limited concern according to communications regulator Ofcom.

But the use of the words 'fenian', 'papist' and 'prod' are deemed as "generally unacceptable".

The broadcast watchdog gave the guidance as it ranked offensive terms on a scale from "mild" to "strongest" in research aimed at gauging people's attitude towards potentially offensive language and gestures in broadcasting.

'Hun', 'Jock' and 'Nazi' is deemed as "mild language, of limited concern," while 'ginger', is considered, "a humorous insult".

The term 'Hun' often used as a derogatory term for Rangers fans was described as: "Mild language, generally of little concern".

However, campaigners fighting for a ban on the word see it as unacceptable believing it is a sectarian insult.

Rangers fans have been campaigning to have the use of the word 'Hun' made illegal following online abuse of pop singer Amy Macdonald last year.

The move was linked to an internet petition which says the word is a term of "religious hatred, a derogatory and sectarian term for a Protestant".

The campaigners say those using the phrase should be treated no differently than those who use offensive words to describe Catholics.

But Ofcom has stated that some respondents who were unaware of its use as an insult assumed it was an abbreviation of "honey".

It said: "Many of the words that were discriminatory on religious grounds were unfamiliar to some of the participants. However, those who were familiar with words such as 'taig' and 'fenian' viewed them as generally offensive and potentially unacceptable."

Ofcom added: "Terms such as 'Jock' or 'Nazi' were felt to be historical insults whose meaning and use had changed and softened over the years."

Ofcom based its judgements on a survey of just 248 people throughout the UK and presented the findings in a document called: "Attitudes to potentially offensive language and gestures on TV and radio."

Shot fired at city flat

A SHOT was fired at a flat in Drumchapel in the early hours of yesterday.

Police said a firearm was discharged at 12.25am at a flat in Southdeen Avenue. No one was in the flat at the time but a window was damaged.

Police suspect a white Ford Transit van, which was found abandoned on Achamore Road a short time later, may have been involved.

An incident room has been set up at Drumchapel Police Office and DI Greig Wilkie is appealing for information.

He said: "Enquiries are continuing in the area with officers carrying out door-to-door enquiries and studying CCTV footage."

"I would urge anyone with information that may assist our enquiry, or who saw the Ford Transit in the area, to contact us through 101."

Man attacked and chased

A GANG of masked men burst into a Paisley home and attacked a 52-year-old man.

The man even escaped the gang's clutches but they chased him and he was subjected to another assault.

The victim was targeted at his home at around 1.50pm on Monday, in Candren Road, Ferguslie Park.

Police are not clear on how

many men were involved in the attack and say it could have been three or four.

The injured man then managed to make his way to a friend's house nearby and called the emergency services.

He was then taken to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley where he is being treated for his injuries and his condition is stable.