

Longer sentences to be piloted for housebreaking



The crime of housebreaking can have a profound effect on those who have had their homes broken into by a stranger. Unfortunately The Edinburgh Reporter knows all about this from personal experience, and it is a horrible experience.

From today, those accused of the crime are being targeted by the prosecution service in a three month trial in Edinburgh.

During the trial period there will be a presumption that anyone charged with theft by housebreaking, or housebreaking with intent to steal, between 3 June and 30 August 2013, will be prosecuted on what is called an indictment – which means the accused could face a higher penalty of up to five years imprisonment.

The aim of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) pilot is to assess the impact of the change of prosecuting housebreakers on indictment. It is hoped that with a more robust policy there will be a decrease in the level of this type of offending.

A comparison will be made with the number of reported cases for last year. Edinburgh has been selected as it is one of the largest courts in Scotland and will provide a larger sample to measure any impact.

John Logue, Procurator Fiscal for the East of Scotland said:

“Housebreaking is a traumatic experience for victims. The effect is not limited to the loss of high value items or damage to property, but also includes the loss of sentimental items, and, perhaps the most profound effect, the loss of

security and safety for victims in their own home.

“In order to try and deter housebreaking over the summer when many people are away on holiday we will, unless there are exceptional circumstances in a case, indict all housebreakers in Edinburgh over the next three months which increases the maximum penalty from 12 months imprisonment to five years.

“The results of the initiative will be considered and used to inform a national policy for COPFS in relation to housebreaking and other similar offences.”