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1<sup>st</sup> July 2024

Dear Convener

## **UPDATE OF PILOT - ACCESS TO TRANSCRIPTS FOR COMPLAINERS IN HIGH COURT SEXUAL OFFENCE CASES**

Following my previous correspondence of 28 February 2024, I am writing to update the Criminal Justice Committee on the pilot providing free access to transcripts for complainers in High Court sexual offence cases which launched on 1 March 2024.

The pilot was launched on 1 March 2024 following detailed scoping work with Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) and Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS), and with an initial budget of £100k.

As you are aware, a key part of the pilot includes the accompanying evaluation which will look to:

- Track the level of demand during the pilot and
- Gather data on the reasons why people request access to them, and which parts of a trial requests are most commonly made.

Whilst we are still in the very early stages of the pilot, my officials have continued to engage with SCTS during this time and have received some early feedback which I would like to share with the Committee.

I can advise that since the launch of the pilot:

- 56 Applications have been received.
- Of those, 4 were not eligible for the pilot, and 1 applicant cancelled their application.
- 51 of those applications are therefore being processed.

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Early feedback has also provided some clarity on the reasons why applications have been made. The vast majority of the applications were in connection with a sense of closure/recovery and very much in keeping with the emphasis placed on the trauma informed person-centred aspect of the pilot. Not surprisingly, cost had been identified as a barrier to any previous applications. A number of applicants also outlined if they had known about the transcript service prior to the launch of the pilot, that the cost of this would have prohibited them from making an application. A number of applicants were hitherto unaware that there was an option to apply for a court transcript and/or aspects of a court transcript. It was worth noting however that information in relation to the pilot is now available on the SCTS website.

It was recognised at the inception that predicting likely demand would be difficult and that regular touch points would be introduced to ensure that the impact on the budget could be managed accordingly.

However, in recognition of the number of applications made to date (where predicted spend would account for over 90% of the exiting budget) and to support the ongoing work and the need for an effective evaluation process, I will be allocating an additional £50k to support the continuation of the pilot.

My officials will continue to engage with SCTS and Rape Crisis Scotland on the pilot and will use the output of the evaluation process to also consider what legislative changes may be required to underpin our future policy approach.

I hope the Committee finds this update helpful and I will continue to update the Committee on how the pilot progresses.

Yours sincerely,



**ANGELA CONSTANCE**

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