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22 January 2014

Dear Ms Baillie

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS S4W-18991, S4W-18992 and S4W-18993

DOMESTIC ABUSE COURTS

The Cabinet Secretary in his response to the above PQs indicated that they relate to operational matters within the responsibility of the Scottish Court Service corporate body. I am now writing to you in response to the matter you have raised.

Before going in to the detail of the response I thought it helpful to explain the arrangements for the Domestic Abuse Courts in Glasgow and Edinburgh. There are important differences in relation to the coverage of domestic cases and the caseload.

The Glasgow Domestic Abuse Pilot court was established in October 2004. Following evaluation a report was published on the Scottish Government website in 2007 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/173485/0048418.pdf>. Since then, Glasgow has established specific courts at first calling, intermediate diet and trial court to deal with all of its Sheriff Court domestic abuse caseload, which now accounts for a volume in the order of between twenty five and thirty per cent of its overall Sheriff Court summary criminal caseload. The caseload and court programming of all court business is kept under close scrutiny and review. This includes domestic abuse cases and, in that respect, the Sheriff Clerk and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service have been examining ways to reduce the delays and proposals on revised court programming arrangements are being considered by the Sheriff Principal.

In Edinburgh, a pilot Domestic Abuse Court was set up in February 2012. The caseload of the pilot court derives from the Police operational command areas of South and East Edinburgh. The numbers of cases reported on in this response relate only to the pilot court.

S4W-18991 asks: *To ask the Scottish Government how many cases are waiting to go to trial at the (a) Glasgow and (b) Edinburgh domestic abuse court.*

At Glasgow Sheriff Court, as of 10 January 2014, there are 1385 domestic abuse cases waiting to go to trial.

In the Edinburgh Pilot Domestic Abuse Court, as of 10 January 2014, there are 90 trials outstanding. This figure relates only to the pilot court.

The above figures have been sourced from local systems used for the allocation and monitoring of court diets.

S4W-18992 asks: *To ask the Scottish Government what the current maximum wait is for a case to go to trial at the (a) Glasgow and (b) Edinburgh domestic abuse court.*

In Glasgow the waiting period between first calling and available trial diet is 22 weeks. For cases in the Edinburgh pilot court the waiting period between first calling and available trial diet is 11 weeks.

S4W-18993 asks: *To ask the Scottish Government how many additional trial diets have been set aside at the (a) Glasgow and (b) Edinburgh domestic abuse court; how many sheriffs have been allocated to these, and how many of them have experience in dealing with domestic abuse cases.*

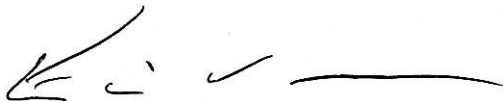
In Glasgow, 66 trial diets per week are set aside for domestic abuse cases. There is also a dedicated court which sits daily to deal with Domestic Abuse non-trial business – new cases, intermediate diets and deferred sentences.

In Edinburgh, nine trial diets per week are set aside for the Domestic Abuse Court.

As to the questions relating to the deployment and experience of Sheriffs presiding in the courts, I should explain that those are matters for the judiciary and are not operational matters for the Scottish Court Service.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre and published on the Scottish Court Service website.

Yours sincerely



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