

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



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Dear Mr Johnson

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS: S5W-19683, S5W-19684, S5W-19685, S5W-19687

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

S5W-19683 asks the Scottish Government how many courtrooms in each court (a) have and (b) do not have video link technology.

Response:

There are 171 court rooms with video link technology, which fully meets our requirements. There are a further 34 court rooms, mainly used for civil business, that do not have video technology as there is no current requirement. We will continue to review the requirements and progressively extend video capacity in our civil courtrooms to support future digital case management.

Appendix A provides a breakdown for each court building.

S5W-19684 asks the Scottish Government how many (a) accused and (b) witnesses have given evidence or appeared from prison using a video link in each of the last five years, broken down by type of hearing.

Response:

(a) The collation of video link usage from courts to prisons commenced in May 2016, therefore information for the full period requested is not available.

For the period available, May 2016 to October 2018, 2439 accused have appeared by video link to participate in a court hearing.

(b) From 2013 to November 2018 there were 7375 requests received for witnesses to give evidence by video in summary proceedings and 1948 in solemn proceedings. Figures for all types of special measures applications received by SCTS are published in the Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses Annual Report on Performance 2017-2018.

Appendix B provides further detail.

S5W-19685 asks the Scottish Government what action it takes to facilitate court appearances from prison by video link; what its position is on the effectiveness of such appearances, and whether it plans to take action to increase the use of this method.

Response:

SCTS leads a cross-justice project with representatives from Scottish Prison Service, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, The Law Society of Scotland and Scottish Legal Aid Board.

We aim to provide court to prison video link capabilities in all 39 Sheriff Courts by March 2020. In collaboration with justice partners we have successfully implemented court to prison video links in 24 Sheriff Courts and the Court of Criminal Appeals.

The use of links to prisons will be expanded to an additional 7 Sheriff Courts and 1 court for preliminary hearings in the High Court by the end of March 2019; the remaining 6 courts will be implemented by March 2020. .

S5W-19687 asks the Scottish Government what guidance is provided regarding the use of video links in criminal courts.

Response:

Guidance and training is provided to court staff and the Judiciary on the operation of video links.

In addition local training and briefing sessions for the Judiciary, legal profession and court staff are held in each court prior to a video link being used for the first time.

A tri-party National Protocol by SCTS, COPFS and SPS is in place in relation to the use of video links to prisons.

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

Yours sincerely



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APPENDIX A - Number of court rooms with VC technology in court buildings

	Court	No. of Court Rooms	No. of Court Rooms with VC Technology
Supreme Courts	Parliament House	12	8
	Edinburgh High Court	5	5
	Glasgow High Court	9	8
	Aberdeen High Court	2	2
	TOTAL		28
Sheriff and JP Courts	Aberdeen	10	10
	Airdrie	5	5
	Alloa	2	2
	Ayr	5	5
	Banff	1	1
	Campbeltown	1	1
	Dumbarton	6	6
	Dumfries	4	4
	Dundee	8	7
	Dunfermline	4	4
	Dunoon	1	1
	Edinburgh	18	12
	Elgin	2	2
	Falkirk	4	3
	Forfar	3	3
	Fort William	1	1
	Glasgow	27	16
	Greenock	4	3
	Hamilton	10	7
	Inverness	4	3
	Jedburgh	2	1
	Kilmarnock	6	6
	Kirkcaldy	4	4
	Kirkwall	1	1
	Lanark	2	2
	Lerwick	1	1
	Livingston	6	6
	Lochmaddy	1	1
	Oban	2	1
	Paisley	9	9
	Perth	5	4
	Peterhead	2	2
	Portree	1	1
	Selkirk	1	1
Stirling	4	3	
Stornoway	1	1	
Stranraer	2	1	
Tain	1	1	
Wick	2	2	
TOTAL		173	144
Stand Alone JP Court	Coatbridge JP Court	1	1
	Hamilton JP Court	1	1
	Kirkcaldy JP Court	1	1
	Lochgilphead JP Court	1	1
	TOTAL		4

APPENDIX B

All Solemn Special Measure Applications Received (High Court & Sheriff Court Solemn)						
Special Measure- Application	2013 Total	2014 Total	2015 Total	2016 Total	2017 Total	2018 ^{YTD} Total ¹
Video In court	88	127	132	184	142	149
Video between courts	42	62	128	74	140	184
Video remote	43	104	82	93	73	101
Total	173	293	342	351	355	434
All Summary Special Measure Applications Received (Sheriff Court & JP Court Summary)						
Special Measure- Application	2013 Total	2014 Total	2015 Total	2016 Total	2017 Total	2018 ^{YTD} Total ¹
Video In court	388	488	775	960	903	705
Video between courts	194	242	143	145	141	69
Video remote	293	357	450	446	349	327
Total	875	1,087	1,368	1,551	1,393	1,101

Court to Prison Video Links – By Hearing Type

YEAR	Full Committal Hearings	Custody Intermediate Diets	High Court Criminal Sentence Appeals
2016 (May - Dec)	300	48	2
2017	551	81	92
2018 (Jan - Oct)	1193	95	77
TOTAL	2044	224	171