

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



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11 November 2016

Dear Ms Baker

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS: S5W-03704 and S5W-03706

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

S5W-03704 and S5W-03706 ask:

How many sheriff court staff have (a) had training to support and (b) supported the function of domestic abuse courts in each year since 2011, and what percentage of the sheriff court workforce this represents; and

How many Scottish Court Service (SCS) staff have (a) had training to support and (b) supported the function of domestic abuse courts in each year since 2011, and what percentage of the SCS workforce this represents.

The SCTS is very much aware of the increasing need to provide support to vulnerable persons during their engagement with the criminal justice system. Cases involving or surrounding domestic violence can be particularly stressful for the parties involved and any children of the relationship. In order to develop our skills in this area, the SCTS recently engaged with Victim Support Scotland to jointly design and run victim awareness training for all frontline staff in the sheriff courts and the High Court who come into contact with victims and witnesses during their attendance at court.

In the main, it is our court officers who interact with victims and witnesses in domestic abuse cases and represent around 15% of the workforce. Other administrative court staff undertake a varied array of tasks on a daily basis and in most locations this will include handling of other forms of criminal business, other than domestic abuse cases, as well as miscellaneous and civil matters. In smaller courts in particular, it would not be feasible to only assign work on domestic abuse cases to individual staff members.

During 2015, 264 members of SCTS staff attended the court officer awareness training, including 241 out of the total 259 court officers employed by the SCTS. Further sessions will be held for new frontline starts during in 2017 and those who missed the earlier courses. As the training is focused upon the needs of frontline staff, it was not attended by staff based in headquarters or the Tribunals supported by the SCTS.

Clerks of court receive separate training on their roles and responsibilities. This covers the requirements of supporting all types of court cases including domestic abuse cases.

I hope that this information is helpful

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric McQueen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric McQueen
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