

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



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Dear Mr Cole-Hamilton

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION S5W-17349 Cannabis-related offences

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

S5W-17349 asked: *how much court time has been spent on cannabis-related offences and what the cost of this has been in each of the last three years.*

Court time is recorded on the basis of types of business relating to the calling of cases rather than the offences involved. As a result court time in relation to specific offence types cannot be isolated. In general terms, for the year 2016-17, 7419 cases involving drugs-related offences proceeded through the courts - however the number of cases specifically relating to cannabis cannot be identified from this figure.

Recent work has shown that around 95% of charges under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (s.5(2)) include a modifier which identifies the drug in question. Scottish Government Criminal Proceedings Statistics on persons convicted with a cannabis modifier recorded against a main charge¹ are as follows:

| People convicted with a cannabis modifier recorded against a main charge | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|
| Total convicted | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
| | 2,460 | 2,643 | 2,412 |

¹ The "main charge" is the crime or offence receiving the most severe penalty if one or more charges are proved in a single proceeding (as defined in Annex C to the Scottish Government's *Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, 2016-17* publication)

The average unit cost of criminal business as published by Scottish Government economists² is also based on the costs of the various stages of proceedings rather than the offences involved.

General information on court sitting days is published in the SCTS 2016-17 Annual Report and Accounts:

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/aboutscs/reports-and-data/reports-data/scts-annual-report-accounts-2016-17.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

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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PP

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² Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Publications/costcrimjustcot>