



Rhoda Grant MSP
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Chief Executive's Office
Parliament House
Parliament Square
Edinburgh
EH1 1RQ
DX 549306
LP1 Edinburgh 10

30 October 2023

Dear Rhoda Grant MSP

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION S6W-21993

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 (SCTS) corporate body. I am now writing in response to the matter raised.

S6W-21993 asks: To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on what steps have been taken to bring domestic abuse courts to the Highlands and Islands.

As set out in our 2023-24 business plan the SCTS is exploring the creation of a Grampian, Highland and Islands sheriffdom wide trauma informed virtual domestic abuse court model.

We are working with the judiciary, justice organisations, the legal profession and Victim Support Scotland to design a new model that both protects the rights of the accused and improves the experience of complainers in domestic abuse cases.

The model proposes the use of increased judicial case management by specialist sheriffs, specialist prosecutors, and support for solicitors to undertake trauma informed training, with early disclosure of key evidence and early access to trial diets. It also aims to enable support services to be effectively focused on a problem solving approach to bail, remand and sentencing and bespoke community rehabilitation disposals.

It is intended that the new court model would initially deal with domestic abuse cases in Aberdeen and following evaluation be extended across Grampian, Highland and Islands. We anticipate being in a position to implement the new model during the early part of 2024.

This is an exciting opportunity to explore and evaluate a fresh trauma informed approach to domestic cases, improving the experience and outcomes for complainers, witnesses and accused.

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
Chief Executive
0131 444 3301
emcqueen@scotcourts.gov.uk