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05 February 2025

Dear Convener

UPDATE OF PILOT - ACCESS TO FREE TRANSCRIPTS FOR COMPLAINERS IN HIGH COURT SEXUAL OFFENCE CASES

Following my previous correspondence, I am writing with an update on the pilot on access to free transcripts for complainers in High Court sexual offence cases which launched on 1 March 2024.

As you are aware, the pilot was launched on 1 March 2024 following detailed scoping work with Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) and Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS), with an initial budget of £100k which was enhanced by a further £50k, as outlined in July 2024. This was in recognition of the initial high level of demand for applications and their associated costs for redaction. During this period we have looked at ongoing demand as well as the reasons behind applications received, and to consider some of the operational aspects of the pilot.

My officials have regularly engaged with SCTS during this time and I would now like to update you on some of the detail and next steps.

I can advise that as of 4 February 2025:

- 87 Applications have been received.
- Of those, 7 were not eligible for the pilot, and 1 applicant cancelled their application.

Consistent with the feedback provided in my letter to the Criminal Justice Committee in July 2024, most of the applications have been made in relation to seeking some degree of closure/recovery and in keeping with the emphasis placed on the trauma informed person-centred aspect of the pilot. The cost of accessing transcripts was also consistently identified in the further evaluation as a barrier to any previous applications. Again, several applicants

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also outlined that had they known they could have applied for a transcript prior to the launch of the pilot, that the cost of this would have prohibited them from making an application.

Ongoing engagement between officials and SCTS has identified several operational considerations of the pilot which requires further development and evaluation. This includes the potential opportunity to develop and test emerging technology that may assist in producing transcripts and a better understanding of the most efficient and effective operation of servicing applications.

In recognition of the areas outlined, and the backlog in processing applications, my intention is to extend the pilot for a further 12 months, from 1 March 2025, with a budget of £150k. This will help inform a definitive view on next steps, including continued evaluation of potential demand and what potential legislative changes may be required to underpin a future approach. I will of course continue to keep the Committee advised.

I hope you find this update of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



ANGELA CONSTANCE

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