

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

5th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Tuesday 22 February 2022

Family law roundtable

Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. The Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee agreed to hold a number of roundtable meetings about subjects within its remit.
2. It held its first civil justice roundtable session at its meeting on 30 November 2021, which focused on the use of remote hearings within the civil justice sector as a result of Covid-19 and the sector's experience and future plans for digital justice as we recover from the pandemic.
3. The next session – a family law roundtable - will be held at this meeting, 22 February 2022, and will focus on the law applying to disputes between parents about the care of their children.

Participants

4. The following people will be taking part in the roundtable—
 - **Judith Higson**, Child and Family Law Sub-Committee, Law Society of Scotland;
 - **Ruth Innes QC**, The Faculty of Advocates;
 - **Lesley Anderson**, Chair, Family Law Association
 - **Megan Farr**, Policy Officer, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland;
 - **Ian Maxwell**, National Manager, Shared Parenting Scotland
 - **Dr Marsha Scott**, Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Women's Aid; and
 - **Rosanne Cubitt**, Head of Practice for Family Mediation and Relationship Counselling, Relationships Scotland.

Format

5. The meeting will be held in hybrid format with some Members of the Committee and witnesses attending in person and others joining virtually.

Topics

6. The roundtable evidence session on family law and disputes between parents about the care of their children will be a chance to discuss topics such as—
 - **The current issues and challenges faced by policymakers and courts when approaching disputes between parents;**
 - **What impact the pandemic has had on parents who live apart from their children maintaining their relationships, and how this might also have impacted on children, support organisations and legal advisers;**
 - **What lessons can be learned from experiences of family cases prior to and throughout the pandemic, for example, the advantages or disadvantages of remote or in-person hearings;**
 - **Implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020;**
 - **Children’s participation in decision-making;**
 - **Child contact centres;**
 - **Child welfare reporters;**
 - **Child advocacy services; and**
 - **Alternative dispute resolution.**

**Clerks to the Committee
February 2022**