



Robert Brown MSP
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Chief Executive's Office
1A Parliament Square
Edinburgh
EH1 1RF

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DX 549306
LP1 Edinburgh 10

Dear Mr Brown

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS S3W-37900 AND S3W-37901 –
LENGTH OF SUMMARY CRIMINAL CASES**

The Cabinet Secretary in his response to the above Parliamentary Questions indicated that they related to operational matters being the responsibility of the Scottish Court Service corporate body. I am now writing to you regarding the questions raised.

The first PQ (**S3W-37900**) asks ... *what the average length of time was for a criminal case to be dealt with by (a) sheriff and (b) district courts in each of the last three years, broken down by police force area.*

The following table provides the average length of summary criminal proceedings, in weeks, from first calling to disposal in both the Sheriff Courts and Justice of the Peace Courts. The information is broken down by sheriffdom, as information by police force area is not held centrally by SCS.

	Sheriff Court				JP Court		
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Glasgow & Strathkelvin	18	11	12		n/a	9	7
Grampian Highland & Islands	9	9	9		n/a	6	6
Lothian & Borders	12	11	12		n/a	6	5
North Strathclyde	11	10	11		n/a	n/a	5
South Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway	11	10	11		n/a	n/a	5
Tayside Central & Fife	13	12	13		n/a	n/a	4

The second PQ (**S3W-37901**) asks ... *what the maximum length of time was for a criminal case to be dealt with by (a) sheriff and (b) district courts in each of the last three years, broken down by police force area.*

The following table provides the maximum length of time (in weeks) for a single summary criminal case to be dealt with in both the Sheriff Courts and Justice of the Peace Courts. The information is broken down by sheriffdom, as information by police force area is not held centrally by SCS.

The duration of criminal court proceedings varies from case to case, and is influenced by a range of factors, such as the legal complexity of the charges, the need to adjourn for the purposes of obtaining legal representation and witness availability.

	Sheriff Court			JP Court		
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Glasgow & Strathkelvin	160	147	132	n/a	154	230
Grampian Highland & Islands	111	158	139	n/a	106	116
Lothian & Borders	110	105	104	n/a	152	80
North Strathclyde	98	106	133	n/a	n/a	157
South Strathclyde, Dumfries & Galloway	152	144	187	n/a	n/a	73
Tayside Central & Fife	123	113	134	n/a	n/a	54

Whilst the figures in the table above show a maximum length of time for specific summary cases, it is worth noting that these are exceptional and are not reflective of the majority of summary criminal cases dealt with by the courts. At a national level during the quarter July to September 2010, 79% of accused had their summary criminal cases dealt with by the courts within a 20 week period, from first court calling to disposal.

As regards both responses above the figures for Justice of the Peace Courts are incomplete for the full requested periods due to the phased implementation of the court unification programme. Prior to court unification, District Courts were administered by individual local authorities.

Yours sincerely



Eleanor Emberson
 Chief Executive
 0131 444 3301
eemberson@scotcourts.gov.uk