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16 January 2025

Dear Mr Lumsden

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION S6W-32320 & S6W-32321

The Cabinet Secretary in her 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 raised.

S6W-32320 asks: how many court sittings were cancelled due to a lack of resources at Aberdeen courts in each of the last five years?

Trials may be adjourned on defence or Crown motion. Trials may also be adjourned on the motion of the court.

With the exception of court adjournments due to 'lack of court time', it is not possible to identify which individual trials were adjourned due to a particular resource issue without interrogating individual court minutes.

SCTS takes the efficiency of court programming seriously. Typically, more than one trial is scheduled for each court sitting. This is to ensure that there is sufficient business for the court to consider that day should a trial resolve early by way of a plea, or be adjourned on Crown or defence motion. This is a balanced approach which provides flexibility to maximise the efficient use of court time.

Some trials will inevitably last longer than others due the inherent complexities in criminal procedure. On some occasions, this means a small number of trials will be adjourned due to a lack of court time.

Trials that are adjourned due to a lack of court time are continued to the next available sitting day.

SCTS statistics on trials adjourned due to lack of court time at Aberdeen are noted in the table below:

Trials Adjudged at Scottish Courts in Aberdeen due to a Lack of Court Time							
Court Type	Case Type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 year to date*
High Court	Indictments	3	0	2	1	2	0
Sheriff Court	Indictments	12	2	30	53	12	5
	Complaints	163	27	72	99	137	18
Justice of the Peace Court	Complaints	31	3	1	5	10	1
Total		209	32	105	158	161	24

Percentage of Trials Adjudged at Scottish Courts in Aberdeen due to a Lack of Court Time							
Court Type	Case Type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 year to date*
High Court	Indictments	5.8%	0.0%	4.3%	2.3%	4.9%	0.0%
Sheriff Court	Indictments	5.0%	1.0%	11.9%	14.5%	2.2%	1.7%
	Complaints	7.1%	2.8%	4.6%	3.0%	6.2%	1.7%
Justice of the Peace Court	Complaints	6.0%	1.7%	0.4%	1.1%	3.4%	1.0%
Total		6.7%	2.4%	5.0%	3.8%	5.2%	1.6%

*The figures for 2024/25 year to date cover the period 1 April - 30 September 2024. This is the latest available data taken from the 'Courts Data Scotland: Criminal' publication

The average percentage of trials adjourned in Aberdeen in 2024/25 to date, due to lack of court time, is 1.6%. There have been no High Court trials calling in Aberdeen adjourned due to lack of court time in 2024/25 to date.

S6W-32321 asks: how many cases were handled by Aberdeen courts in each of the last five years, broken down by court type?

Please see below table of Cases registered at Aberdeen:

Cases registered at Scottish Courts in Aberdeen							
Court Type	Case Type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 year to date
Sheriff Court	Petitions	682	997	941	932	945	416
	Indictments	497	445	520	433	542	258
	Complaints	4331	3529	3717	3389	3580	1689
Justice of the Peace Court	Complaints	3225	1250	2120	1184	1202	620
Total (excluding Petitions)		8053	5224	6357	5006	5324	2567

Petitions are not included in the total count of cases registered as not all petitions lead to further criminal proceedings. Any petition in which there are further proceedings will go on to become registered as a complaint or indictment. Therefore petition numbers have been excluded from the total to remove any element of 'double counting'. High Court indictments are registered centrally rather than by specific court location.

SCTS publishes a range of data on criminal business on our website at [Publications | Scottish Courts](#). The Monthly Criminal Management Information (MCMI) report contains extensive data in relation to the throughput of criminal business, including trial adjournments. The MCMI provides data from 2019-20 and is updated monthly.

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 'Malcolm Graham', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

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