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## **LAUNCH OF PILOT - ACCESS TO TRANSCRIPTS FOR COMPLAINERS IN HIGH COURT SEXUAL OFFENCE CASES**

Dear Convener,

Following my previous correspondence, I am writing to inform the Criminal Justice Committee that a pilot on access to transcripts for complainers in High Court sexual offence cases will launch on 1 March 2024.

The pilot is expected to run for a 12-month period (subject to anticipated demand and the funding allocated) and will allow complainers in High Court trials involving a charge(s) of rape and/or sexual assault to make a request for funding to support an application for a transcript at no cost to themselves.

The pilot will enable applications for retrospective cases from 31 December 2006 or thereafter. This date is informed by the introduction of digital recording in the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service.

The aims of the pilot are primarily to improve our understanding of the reasons why applications are being made in these particular cases, this will include understanding the potential volume of applications and the extent to which cost has been a barrier for applying previously. This will be used to help inform future policy and operational development, including if there is a need for a change to existing legislation. A key aspect to deliver on that aim will be the accompanying evaluation which will look to:

- Track the level of demand during the pilot and
- Gather data on the reasons why people request access to them, and which parts of a trial requests are most commonly made.

My officials have continued to work alongside partners, most particularly the SCTS and Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) to develop the work of the pilot alongside a guidance note and application form to assist individuals in the application process.

As I have previously outlined, I am clear that the pilot must be advanced alongside our collective wider efforts for a person centred and trauma informed justice system.

Given his previous comments to the Committee, I have also written in identical terms to the Lord Justice General to inform him of the launch of the pilot.

I thank the Criminal Justice Committee for their continued interest in this matter and I hope the Committee finds this update of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angela Constance', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**ANGELA CONSTANCE**

Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs