

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service



Ken Dalling

By Email –
president@lawscot.org.uk

20 December 2021

**Chief Executive's Office
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Dear Ken

COVID RESTRICTIONS

Thanks for your letter of 17 December, following the meeting of the LSS COVID Resilience Group. We are all benefitting from the strong collaboration that is in place and this will no doubt be even more important in the coming weeks as the extent and impact of the Omicron variant becomes clearer.

On the specific points you raised:

- We anticipate all decisions on priority summary trials proceeding being made in advance of the 5 day notice period. This is more an absolute minimum period to ensure that the published court rolls are fully updated.
- You are right to highlight the critical engagement of defence agents in the rollout of fully virtual custody courts. This engagement has already commenced with Sheriff Principal Murray writing to North Strathclyde faculties and he is meeting today with representatives from local faculties' and my delivery team to discuss the rollout and engagement.
- The Falkirk evaluation has yet to be finalised and Sheriff Principal Lewis has asked that the pilot continues until April 2022
- I completely agree the need for understanding and kindness to be at the forefront of all our minds. The coming weeks may arguably be the most challenging time of the pandemic with increasing positive cases numbers, high levels of self-isolation and the potential for further government restrictions. I have shared your thoughts with the senior judiciary.

With the collaboration of the legal profession and COPFS, we are for the time being trying to continue with as much business in the courts as possible and will do so as long as that remains safe and viable. Therefore all jury trials will continue as programmed, the PIDM process will continue to enable resolution of as many cases as

possible, Sheriff summary trials are proceeding with an added focus on ensuring priority trials are prepared and ready to run and the switch JP notional trials present the opportunity to resolve cases with the accused present.

While our next scheduled meeting is 10 January, depending on the emerging public health position we may need to convene earlier and of course please feel free to get in touch at any point.

Take care and stay safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric McQueen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric McQueen
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