Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Matthew Andrews

As a member of East Lothian's Children Panel, I would like to express my concern at the planned closure of Haddington Sheriff Court as I feel it will materially negatively impact outcomes for the children in East Lothian. My key points are:

1. The workload of Edinburgh Sheriff Court and the differing practices around concurrence of diets for permanency hearings will delay permanency proceedings unduly for children and relevant people.

2. That the Sheriffs in Haddington are familiar with the local challenges faced in a rural area, so understand the impact and complexity of issues in context of a non-city environment.

3. That while attendance in court for children and families can never be pleasant, that the environment and setting of Haddington makes the experience less traumatic.

4. That the consultation by the Government was flawed, with no weight being given to local issues and concerns, with cost being the over-riding concern.

5. That with the planned changes in the hearing system and its progressive centralisation; the removal of local courts will further break the community basis of child protection, in its widest sense, in Scotland.

I urge the committee to work to challenge the flawed decision by the Scottish Government to close these vital local resources.

Matthew Andrews
14 May 2013