

F/T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sue Webber MSP
Convener, Education, Children and Young People
Committee
Scottish Parliament
By email: ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

Cc: justice.committee@parliament.scot
Cc: ministercypkp@gov.scot

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16 April 2024

Dear Convener

ANONYMITY FOR DECEASED CHILD VICTIMS

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of our intention to publish a public consultation on anonymity for deceased child victims.

I am aware that this issue has been raised during your scrutiny of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill, and as you know, the Scottish Government has been considering this in collaboration with stakeholders. This included a roundtable on 20 February, which you attended.

The roundtable discussion and our other exploratory work, including meetings I have had with the families of victims, have clearly demonstrated to me the complexity of this issue and the wide range of differing views on what can be done to resolve it.

I have also been profoundly struck by the distress and retraumatisation experienced by the families of victims as a result of ongoing press and social media coverage.

While the number of families directly affected by this issue is thankfully very small, a change in this area could have significant implications for media organisations and the general public, both as users of social and other media, and in terms of public interest.

For these reasons, I think it is critical that we conduct a wider exploration of this issue and possible options for change in a full public consultation. I am committed to ensuring that we

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build a robust body of evidence in order to inform any next steps in this area, noting that this could involve legislative or non-legislative measures.

I am currently considering how a consultation can be framed and the timescales for its publication this year. I will write to you again with an update on this work in the coming months.

I am copying this letter to the Criminal Justice Committee (noting its comments about this issue in its Stage 1 report on the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill) and the Minister for Children, Young People, and Keeping the Promise.

Yours sincerely

ANGELA CONSTANCE

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