



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Justice Committee

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By e-mail

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Dear Teresa and Eric,

### **Re-opening Scotland's courts – use of videolinks**

As you will no doubt be aware, the Justice Committee has been looking at efforts to re-open Scotland's courts and tribunals, in particular for solemn criminal cases.

At yesterday's Committee meeting, Ronnie Renucci QC of the Scottish Criminal Bar Association made reference to some of the challenges in setting up multi-location videolinks for a prisoner to engage with the justice system whilst remaining in prison. He said:

“We are not sure what the problem was in relation to prisons. Initially, the criminal appeal court seemed to have a problem, but our understanding is that it has now been resolved.

However, there is a problem with consultations with the accused. For some reason, the prisons cannot do three-way consultations: counsel and the solicitor have to be together if they are consulting by video link. They can do it with one person on the other end of a phone line but that is really not satisfactory. We do not know what the technical problem is, but we know that the Scottish Legal Aid Board looked into the issue with prisons and was told that the three-way consultation could not be done, at this stage.”

I should be grateful if you would explain to the Committee what the issue is, whether it can be resolved, what is needed to resolve this and when this (or a viable alternative) will be in place?

I look forward to an early response to this letter.

Best wishes,

Margaret Mitchell MSP  
Convener, Justice Committee