

**Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 9 September 2026
4th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)**

Courts, delays and user experience

Introduction

1. At its [meeting on 24 June 2026](#), the Committee agreed to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to give evidence, and to hold a number of evidence sessions with key stakeholders to explore current priorities and challenges across the criminal justice sector. The evidence programme has been developed following the Committee's consideration of priorities for Session 7.
2. The Committee began this work at its meeting on 2 September 2026. The Committee heard initial evidence on justice system pressures and priorities at its meeting on 2 September 2026. Members may wish to consider today's evidence in the context of issues raised during that session, particularly where witnesses comment on system-wide challenges affecting the operation of the courts.
3. The Committee will hear from two witness panels covering courts, backlogs and workforce issues, and the experiences of court users. Together with the evidence taken on 2 September, these sessions will help inform the Committee's understanding of current pressures and priorities across the justice system.
4. At today's meeting, the Committee will hear from the following two witness panels:
 - A panel focusing on courts, backlogs and workforce
 - A panel focusing on courts and court users (support and experience)
5. Together, these sessions are intended to explore both strategic and operational challenges facing Scotland's justice system, with a particular focus on the Scottish courts system and the people who come into contact with it.
6. The Committee will continue its wider programme of evidence-gathering with stakeholders throughout September and early October, culminating in a final session with the Cabinet Secretary.

Overview of evidence sessions

Courts, backlogs and workforce

7. During this opening session, the Committee will focus on evidence from system operators and legal professionals regarding backlog reduction, operational resources, and workforce sustainability. The session may consider timelines for clearing the remaining trial backlogs, workforce pressures, the impact that shortages of duty solicitors can have, digital evidence sharing and summary procedural reforms.

Courts and court users (support and experience)

8. The second session will focus on the experiences of victims, witnesses and vulnerable users navigating the court system. The session may explore the impact of court delays and repeated adjournments on victim engagement and case attrition rates, the delivery of special measures, remote evidence hubs, and trauma-informed practices, and whether practical improvements could be made to ensure compassionate communication with court users.

Written correspondence

9. Prior to the summer recess, the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Minister for Victims and Community Safety seeking information on issues raised during the Committee's initial discussions on Session 7 priorities. The response has been published on the [Committee's webpage](#).
10. In response to the Committee's request, the Scottish Government invited the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to provide further detail on specific issues arising from the Session 7 priorities discussions that fall within its remit. The response has been published on the [Committee's webpage](#).
11. In advance of today's meeting, the Committee also received written evidence from the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service covering issues relevant to courts, delays and court user experience. The submission has been published on the [Committee's webpage](#) and may assist members in their questioning of witnesses.
12. Members may wish to draw on the information contained in this correspondence when questioning witnesses during today's evidence sessions.

**Clerks to the Committee
September 2026**