

Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 23 September 2026
6th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

Domestic abuse

Background

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 series of evidence sessions with key stakeholders to explore current priorities and challenges across the criminal justice sector.
2. The evidence programme is designed to provide the Committee with an overview of the key priorities it identified during work programme discussions. As part of this programme, the Committee heard evidence from the following witnesses:
 - [2 September 2026](#): The Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary on justice system pressures and priorities, followed by two witness panels on prison operations, and remand and bail.
 - [9 September 2026](#): The Committee heard from two witness panels on court services, case backlogs, workforce challenges and the experiences of court users.
 - [16 September 2026](#): The Committee heard from two witness panels on policing, non-criminal demand and inter-agency support.
3. The Committee will continue its evidence-gathering programme on 30 September 2026, hearing from two witness panels on custodial and community sentences and victims' perspectives across the justice system.
4. The evidence from across the programme will help inform the Committee's understanding of current pressures and priorities across the justice system.
5. The programme will conclude with evidence from the Cabinet Secretary on 7 October 2026, focusing on the Scottish Government's response to the key challenges and priorities identified during the evidence sessions.

Today's meeting

6. At today's meeting, the Committee will hear from the following two witness panels on domestic abuse:
 - A panel focusing on advocacy and the victim experience
 - A panel focusing on the justice system response

7. Together, these sessions are intended to explore how effectively the justice system responds to domestic abuse, from the experiences of victims and survivors through to the investigation and prosecution of offences.

Overview of evidence sessions

Advocacy and the victim experience

8. During this opening session, the Committee will focus on how statutory protections and advocacy frameworks operate for victim-survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence, particularly in intimate partner relationships. The session may consider the effectiveness of legal protections and advocacy services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, including evidential challenges, court processes, trial delays and measures to reduce re-traumatisation.

The justice system response

9. The second session will focus on how statutory law enforcement agencies investigate and prosecute domestic abuse offences. The session may consider how domestic abuse cases are investigated and prosecuted, including examining caseload management, the use of digital evidence, measures to reduce case attrition, the monitoring of protective measures, and the delivery of trauma-informed approaches to support victims and survivors throughout the justice process.

Written correspondence

10. 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](#).

Clerks to the Committee
September 2026