

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

VULNERABLE WITNESSES (CRIMINAL EVIDENCE) (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM: LORD PRESIDENT

Thank you for your letter dated 5 December, in respect of the support provided to vulnerable witnesses once criminal proceedings in which they have given evidence are concluded. This is an area in which the courts themselves have no direct involvement. The role of the court is to ensure that the proceedings are conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible, with every witness given the best possible opportunity to give their evidence, safely and completely. The court only has authority in respect of the conduct of the proceedings. It has no authority, resource or expertise available in respect of post-proceeding support for those who have given evidence.

When looking at the operation of the justice system as a whole, it is, of course, of great importance that we eliminate any disincentive to give evidence in court, including the potential for further victimisation after the conclusion of proceedings. This is a matter that I understand will be looked at in some detail by the newly constituted Victims Taskforce, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Lord Advocate. The Chief executive of the SCTS, Eric McQueen, is a member of the Taskforce, and will take an active role in its work.