

Government to hold consultation on pre-recorded evidence in criminal trials

✘ Views are being sought on the best way to spare child witnesses from having to give evidence during criminal trials.

The consultation seeks views on the Government vision that all child witnesses will have their evidence recorded as early as possible, and asks how a model for prerecording evidence could work best for Scotland.

✘
Michael
Matheson

Justice Secretary Michael Matheson said: “Giving evidence to a court can be extremely difficult and emotional for anyone, particularly a child or vulnerable witness.

“Making sure those witnesses feel safe, secure and able to share their account of events effectively not only protects them from ongoing risk, but helps them give the best evidence.

“That is why we are seeking views on reforms which would stop children having to give evidence in court during a criminal trial. This is a positive step in the right direction to protect the most vulnerable.

“This is an ambitious aim and it is likely to take time to fully achieve. But I believe it is vital and necessary that we make this important progressive change whilst also ensuring that the rights of a person accused of a crime are maintained.”

The Scottish Government is already working with partners to

encourage earlier pre-recording of evidence as part of the Joint Investigative Interview process.

This includes looking at how practical support is provided and how technology and facilities can be enhanced.

Whilst, the initial focus is on child witnesses, any new model will be flexible enough to accommodate vulnerable adult witnesses in the future. The consultation will run until Friday 29 September.