

Trial adjournments will have 'huge impact on Scotland's most vulnerable victims'

The Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service yesterday announced that up to 75% of criminal trials will be adjourned due to the new variant of COVID-19 across Scotland and this will have a huge impact on some of the country's most vulnerable victims according to Victim Support Scotland.

The Lord President has said that from today, in support of the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, that the majority of summary trials in the Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court will be put on hold. More serious cases go will go ahead as planned. The delays to proceedings will continue until 28 February.



Victim Support Scotland expressed concerns at the peak of the pandemic last year about the impact court delays are having on victims and witnesses. The charity reported a 400% increase in people it was supporting expressing suicidal thoughts.

Victim Support Scotland is concerned that these new court delays will impact victims' mental health and emotional wellbeing further.

Kate Wallace, Chief Executive of Victim Support Scotland, said: "We recognise that we are in the middle of a public

health crisis and that measures must be put in place to protect people from entering court buildings. Today's announcement will, however, have a huge impact on some of Scotland's most vulnerable victims who will be left with a lot of uncertainty as to when their trials will go ahead. This will be hard news to swallow for many of Scotland's victims and witnesses who were preparing to go to court.

"Everyone in the justice system must do everything within their power to ensure that victims and witnesses do not face further traumatisation as a result of trials being adjourned.

"We are currently working with colleagues at the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal (COPFS) and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service to improve support and communications with victims and witnesses affected by this development.

"Providing practical and emotional support to people affected by crime is imperative at this time. Victim Support Scotland will continue to provide our services to everyone impacted by crime, regardless of if their trial has been adjourned or is still going ahead. Our support also includes court familiarisation visits, for those who are apprehensive about attending trials, and access to the Victims' Fund for people concerned about their safety or in immediate financial hardship as the result of a crime.

"For anyone who was due to go to court from tomorrow as a witness, you should not attend unless you have been contacted directly by COPFS and advised otherwise.

"If you have been impacted by crime or have concerns about your trial, Victim Support Scotland can help you. You can call our free confidential helpline on 0800 160 1985 or visit victimsupport.scot."