

VULNERABLE WITNESSES ACT IMPLEMENTATION STEERING GROUP

CHILD WITNESSES STATISTICS

1. Members are invited to note the attached figures from VIA setting out the number of child witnesses processed through the criminal justice system in 2003/04. The figures relate to prosecution witnesses only in High Court, Sheriff and Jury and Sheriff Summary Courts and District Courts. The figures do not cover defence witnesses cited, or witnesses cited in civil cases.

2. The figures show that of 21,817 child witnesses only 7,975 were cited. Of these 7,117 were aged 16 or under (of which 1,596 were under 12). This must be seen against a background of a total of 345,323 child and adult witnesses cited. In other words, just over 2% of all witnesses cited in 03-04 were children aged 16 or under (0.46% were under 12). We do not know how many actually appeared in court to give their evidence but this will be less than the numbers cited.

3. Of these child witnesses cited in respect of High Court cases only 36 were under 12 and 199 were in the age group between 12 and 16. The highest numbers were in Glasgow, followed by Argyle and Clyde, Grampian, Fife, Lothian, Lanarkshire, Central and Tayside.

4. In Sheriff and Jury trials 107 witnesses under 12 were cited and 415 were in the age group between 12 and 16. The highest numbers were in Glasgow followed by Lanarkshire, Central, Tayside, Argyle and Clyde, Lothian, Ayr and Grampian.

5. The vast majority of child witnesses cited were in Sheriff Summary cases of which there were 1384 under 12s and 4976 between the ages of 12 and 16.

6. In addition District Court cases accounted for 59 under the age of 12 and 702 between the ages of 12 and 16.

7. It should be noted that these figures do not show numbers requiring special measures and that **some child witnesses may have been cited more than once.**

8. For the purposes of estimating the automatic entitlement for special measures we would require figures for those aged 15 and under since the legislation classifies child witnesses as those under 16 years of age.

SEJD

Victims and Witnesses Unit

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