

Vulnerable Witnesses Act to come into force in January

Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf and Lady Dorrian, Lord Justice Clerk today officially opened the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service's new Glasgow Evidence and Hearings Suite.

It provides facilities to let child witnesses pre-record their evidence and for vulnerable witnesses to give evidence remotely away from the formality of a court room. The suite also provides hearing rooms for the Additional Support Needs Tribunal.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Yousaf confirmed that the Commencement Regulations for the [Vulnerable Witnesses \(Criminal Evidence\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) has been laid in Parliament and will come into effect on 20 January 2020.

He said:

"Today we have laid the regulations to ensure that any child witness under the age of 18 giving evidence in the most serious cases will be allowed to have it pre-recorded, sparing them the trauma of giving evidence during a trial. This first phase of implementing the new pre-recording rule will cover certain cases in the High Court.

"As these reforms will affect live cases it is necessary to make transitional arrangements so the new rule will apply to cases where the accused first appears on petition on or after 20 January 2020. We plan to ensure that these reforms are evaluated at each stage of the roll out to ensure the smooth implementation in practice of such important changes in how these vulnerable children will give their evidence.

"I have said previously that legislative reform is only a small part of the work that is needed to ensure that there is much greater use of pre-recording within the justice system.

"The other part of that jigsaw is why we are here today – by beginning the process on delivering sufficient and modern facilities and reliable pre-recording technology. We were delighted to be able to provide funding of almost one million pounds to assist in the development of this progressive and modern venue.

"It is absolutely imperative that we continue to deliver on our promises, and on the Scottish Government's vision to continually look at improving how child and vulnerable witnesses participate in our criminal justice system."

The post [Vulnerable Witnesses Act to come into force in January](#) appeared first on [Justice and Safety](#).