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The justice system should consider assigning a single sheriff to deal with the entirety of a domestic abuse victim's court case, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

As part of a debate on domestic violence today, shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the move would mean families affected by the issue would not have to recount experiences to different sheriffs or judges.

The approach has been successfully trialled in the US and Australia, with similar trials are underway in England.

As it stands, the entirety of a domestic abuse case and related proceedings could be heard by various members of the judiciary, especially if civil courts become involved in the event of a subsequent divorce.

MSPs were debating the first stage of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) bill in Holyrood this afternoon.

## **Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:**

"Courts can sometimes seem stacked against domestic abuse survivors, and there's an acceptance that the process can be traumatic.

"As such, steps should be taken to minimise what they have to re-live.

"As it stands, victims of domestic abuse have to recount their cases to multiple sheriffs or judges.

"In these cases, a number of factors can be at play, such as divorce or child residence arrangements, on top of the actual allegations of domestic abuse.

"Domestic violence victims face many barriers to safety and independence. Incomprehensible and complex court proceedings should not be one.

"I accept there would be issues to address in terms of actually making this happen.

"But surely these trials must be considered to help victims of domestic abuse north of the border."