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More than half of sheriff courts are taking longer to process cases than they were last year.

In addition, only half of sheriff courts are meeting the 26 week target (from issuing a caution or charge to reaching a verdict) in less than 70% of cases.

Only three courts – Portree, Lerwick, Lochmaddy – managed to meet the target for 100% of cases in any month in 2017.

Out of all Scotland's 39 sheriff courts, 21 are performing even worse than a year ago.

The statistics were revealed following a parliamentary question by Shadow Justice Secretary Liam Kerr.

The Scottish Conservatives warned against court closures, arguing delays like this would occur, while lawyers have also been critical of the decision.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“This situation is a direct result of the Scottish Government's ill-conceived policy of closing courts, which they were warned about.

“The Scottish Conservatives have already raised this issue time and again but nothing has been done and the situation is continuing to get worse.

“These lengthy, and growing, delays have serious knock-on consequences for the witnesses and victims of crime.

“The SNP has to take this issue seriously, put sufficient resources into the remaining Sheriff Courts to ensure that innocent people are not waiting a ridiculously long time for justice.

“The Scottish Government caused this issue, now they must fix it.”