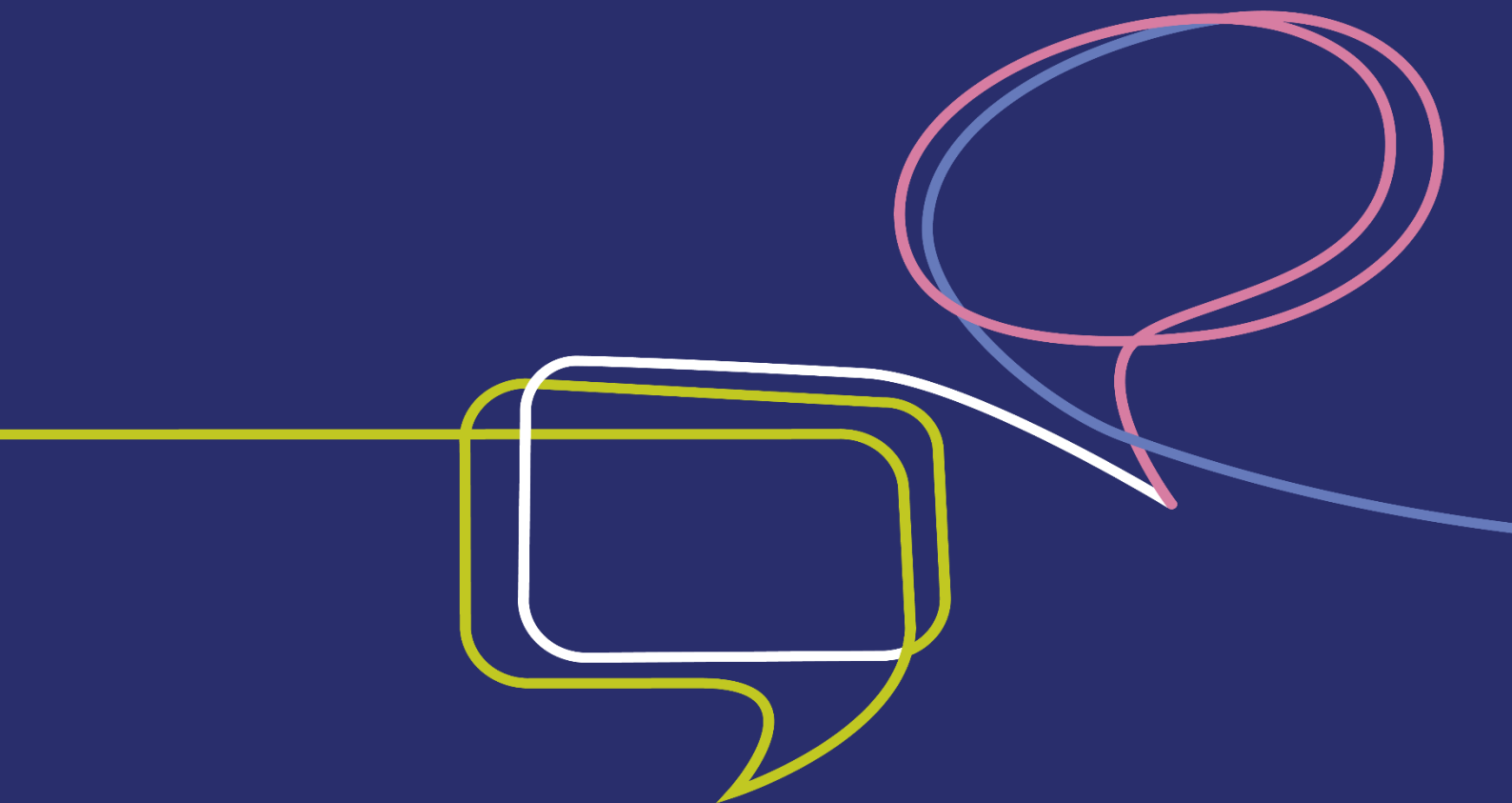


Redress Scotland Survivor
Engagement Annual Report
2025-26



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1. Introduction

At Redress Scotland, we remain committed to working closely with survivors and ensuring that their voices continue to shape how we develop and improve our work. Listening to and learning from people's lived experiences is central to how we operate, and it plays a key role in helping us strengthen our approach.

Our values of dignity, respect and compassion guide everything we do. They influence how we engage with survivors, how we reflect on feedback, and how we hold ourselves accountable. These values are not just principles; they are reflected in the way we build relationships, respond to challenges, and strive to continually improve.

In this report, we highlight some of the key engagement activity undertaken during the 2025–26 business year. We have also set out where we believe we can make changes, as well as the areas we believe should be our focus as we continue to develop our work going forward.

2. What we did

16 engagement activities have taken place over the past year in various forms including: online engagement sessions; in person engagement sessions; and in person meetings with survivors as part of their application process. We have engaged with a variety of stakeholders including survivors and survivor organisations. We have also undertaken informal engagement work on an individual basis with survivors.

2.1 In person meetings

These meetings are held when panel members decide that there is a need for further information regarding a survivor's application. They are uncommon and often driven by a range of accessibility needs and where the panel members feel it is the most appropriate approach to get the information they need to make a decision on the survivor's application.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, we held seven in-person meetings with survivors. Five of these took place in person, one was held via Microsoft Teams, and one took place over the phone. In most cases, the survivor, a panel member and the Engagement Lead were present. On one occasion, a legal representative also attended, and on another, the survivor's partner was there to support them.

Although these meetings can be an intense experience for survivors, the feedback we've received has been positive. One survivor's partner shared that, while there is a financial aspect to the process, the real value was in their partner finally being able to speak about their experiences. Another

survivor told us that they had “never felt so heard and seen” as they did during their meeting.

The Engagement Lead supports survivors before and after these meetings, helping to ease any anxieties about the process and making sure they feel informed and involved throughout.

The Engagement Lead also works closely with panel members meeting with them beforehand to talk through the process and share any relevant information about the survivor’s wellbeing. After each meeting, they follow up again to reflect, capture any learning, and consider any next steps.

2.2 Online Joint Engagement Session – Redress Scotland and Scottish Government

We attended two online engagement sessions with Survivor Forum members. These were held jointly with the Scottish Government and the Redress Support Service.

The purpose of these sessions was to provide updates on work taking place across the whole of the scheme and give survivors an opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the process.

12 survivors joined across the two sessions.

Some of the key topics discussed during the sessions included: timescales; records; support for survivors; uncertainties around the process; and which organisations were responsible for different parts of the process. There was an opportunity for a Q&A session after each of the organisations presented information about their part of the scheme.

While these sessions gave us some useful insights, they also highlighted opportunities to make them more engaging and accessible. We saw some drop-off from those who initially signed up, which has helped us better understand where we can improve. We will continue to work with members of the Survivor Relations Team within the Scottish Government to explore new approaches, with a focus on creating more engaging and meaningful online sessions in the year ahead.

2.3 Survivor Forum Face to Face Engagement Sessions

During the year we held two face-to-face engagement sessions through the Survivor Forum. These were hosted by members from across the Redress Scotland team including panel support coordinators,

One session was held in Glasgow and the other was held in Edinburgh. Overall, 65 individuals attended these sessions, including survivors and people

who provide individual support to survivors. Of those who came along, 56% had never been along to an engagement session before and 44% had attended previously.

At the start of both sessions, the members of staff introduced themselves and the Engagement Lead gave an overview of Redress Scotland and some of the work we were doing. There was also an emphasis during this introduction to tell survivors about the changes that had been made within the organisation as a result of direct survivor feedback at engagement events. Taking this approach allows us to highlight how valuable their feedback is to Redress Scotland and that we genuinely use this to inform the work that we do.

After the introduction, we split survivors into small groups with two members of the team in each group. We had a variety of staff attend both sessions, with members from the Engagement, Communications and Knowledge team, as well as the Operations team.

The first part of the session is designed for survivors to 'ask us anything.' This is an opportunity for survivors to discuss any topic that they want and for us to support, guide, and give any information that we are able to. The second part of the day is more focused and during one of the session we discussed our communications and showcased our new end to end process leaflet. The feedback on this was excellent. One survivor stated that if they had received this while applying, it would have been 'incredibly helpful.' During the second engagement session, we showcased our new website in the afternoon which went live the previous day. The feedback on this was also positive and survivors particularly liked the quick exit button.

At the end of the second session in March, we asked survivors to fill in a survey about any work that they would be interested in being involved in moving forward. The hope from this is that we can ask a wider range of survivors to be involved in small group engagement sessions moving forward.

These sessions are an invaluable way for us to engage with and listen directly to survivors. We have found that staff who support these sessions gain a lot from them too. Below is feedback from a panel support co-ordinator who attended a session:

'Having already provided support a large survivor engagement session, I thought I knew what to expect when supporting another one almost a year later. I was wrong. There were a couple of survivors who I had previously been involved in providing regular updates to. They had already received their determination letters months before. Whilst I was aware of the positive impact this had on them at the time, I was blown away by how much more confident, stronger and determined they seemed to be. Both within themselves and in supporting the work of Redress Scotland for other survivors.'

There was a gentleman that arrived late and I remember him knocking on the door that my group was working in. He was absolutely terrified and it just felt as though he was asking for permission to be there, even though Rachael had invited him. He joined the group I was working with. By the afternoon, he had completely relaxed and offered significant contributions to the group. He spoke to me before leaving and told me that the session reminded him a lot of his addiction support groups. He described it as a space free of judgement or pressure. A place in the world where, although you know there are thousands of others like you who have experienced abuse, you found yourself surrounded by others who can instantly identify with others without any need for explanation or justification of what it means to be a survivor.

There were two key reflections that I had following the session:

- 1) On my very first panel sitting day at Redress Scotland, the panel chair spoke so passionately reminding us all to find the light in the dark. Leaving the session I was more aware than ever that for many survivors, the recognition they receive from us, is akin to us handing them a torch in the dark and letting them choose to shine the light they deserve. Thinking of this in regards to my own role: I get the amazing opportunity to be a part of that for so many; whether it's helping process an application we have received from The Scottish Government, doing the QA on the packs, supporting a panel or even just being that listening ear at the end of a phone through my work on general enquiries.*
- 2) I was amazed at the determination of those who had been through the process to use their experience and understanding to help others; whether it be through feedback to ourselves or even taking the time to speak to survivors who were still going through the application process and reassure them. A few days later I heard a quote from the former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, "It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent." When I heard them I immediately thought of the survivors at the engagement session. That's when I realised the work I am proud to be a part of doesn't just give recognition... it empowers people. Ever since that day I've had those words as the wallpaper on my laptop so that I start each day remembering what the Scheme is all about: Recognition, Acknowledgement and Empowerment.'*

[2.4 Small Group Engagement Sessions](#)

After the success of the introduction of small group engagement sessions in February 2025, we continued to use this approach during 2025-2026 to gather more focused feedback on the work within Redress Scotland.

This year we have held a further 2 small group engagement sessions. One of these was held with 6 survivors in Glasgow and focused on the development of podcasts. It was important for us to have the podcasts as a collaborative piece of work with survivors as they are our target audience.

The feedback from this session was that survivors want to know internal details about the workings of Redress Scotland and how this can actively support them in accessing and applying to the scheme. They also felt as though they were 'left in the dark' a lot when it came to how panels work and how decisions are made so thought that it would be important to hear more in-depth information about this. The group also thought that one of the things that survivors struggle with is lack of support so they wanted us to have an episode which focused on this.

As a result of this feedback, one of our first podcasts was recorded and focused on the panel sitting day process and what survivors should expect when their application reaches Redress Scotland. We also recorded an episode with the Redress Support Service which focused on different ways survivors can access support and how they can do this.

The second small-group engagement session took place in Glasgow with two survivors, after three of the five originally planned attendees were unable to join. The session focused on website FAQs and paid participation.

Despite the smaller group, it generated valuable and honest feedback. Participants shared their views on making the FAQ content clearer and more reflective of real user questions, and emphasised that paid participation should be fair, transparent and easy to understand. Their input directly informed both the FAQ section and the paid participation policy, which have now been implemented.

Below is more feedback from a panel support coordinator who attended our large engagement session in March.

'In respect of the survivor engagement day I want to start by saying that it was an absolute privilege to be able to share the day with all the survivors and to be trusted enough by them for them to share their stories.

I am amazed at the resilience that they showed and how they have made a success of their lives despite what they have been through. Their willingness to share their stories in the smaller groups and to help and advise others who were at different stages of the process was amazing. The ability to also laugh at some of their experiences despite the effect it must have had on them was inspiring.

For me making a connection with a survivor was probably the highlight. Being able to be trusted by her when she had only just met me and allow me to

read the paperwork that SG had sent her and give her advice was very special.

The whole day was brilliantly organised and well thought out.'

2.5 Working with Other Organisations

This year, we had several valuable opportunities to engage directly with a range of stakeholders and share more information about the scheme. We delivered three presentations in total: two in partnership with the Scottish Government and one independently. The joint sessions included presentations to the State Hospital and their Victims and Trauma Network. In both instances, we provided an overview of the scheme, outlining our individual roles and responsibilities, before opening the floor for questions from attendees.

The attendees for these sessions were made up of professionals from a variety of sectors and local authorities, including social workers, mental health nurses, and other frontline practitioners. Many of those attending the State Hospital session worked with adults with learning disabilities, particularly individuals connected to Lennox Castle. Following this session, we were able to offer further engagement and potential collaboration for teams who felt additional support or discussion would be beneficial.

Separately, the Engagement Lead and Operations Manager met with staff from the Hub for SUCCESS at Edinburgh Napier University. This service supports care-experienced students to access, remain in, and succeed within higher education. They had been assisting a number of students with applications to the scheme and were keen to gain a clearer understanding of the process.

Feedback across all of these engagements was very positive. Attendees consistently reported that the presentations helped to clarify the structure of the scheme and provided a much clearer understanding of the different roles and responsibilities within it.

2.6 Paid Participation

This year we have developed a paid participation policy which will allow survivors to be compensated for the work that they support us with.

Developing a paid participation policy was an important step to recognise the time given and expertise that survivors bring when they contribute to our work. Too often, people with lived experience are asked to share their perspectives without appropriate acknowledgement or offer of compensation, which can feel unfair. By putting a clear policy in place, we wanted to make sure that involvement is respectful, transparent, and

equitable from the outset. It also helps to set clear expectations about what we need survivor's support with when developing certain pieces of work and makes it easier to set out clear deliverables.

Paid participation will be introduced for pieces of work such as video and podcast development. It will also be accessible for survivors who are involved in future small group engagement sessions as we will be looking for focused contributions.

2.7 Survivor Engagement Working Group

Over the past year, the Engagement Lead has continued to develop and embed the internal survivor engagement working group, bringing together colleagues from across operations and the Engagement, Communications and Knowledge team. The group provides a space to plan, shape, and support ongoing survivor engagement work in a more coordinated and collaborative way.

The working group has been a really valuable resource, helping to strengthen how we plan and deliver engagement activity. Members have supported the preparation and facilitation of sessions, as well as follow-up activity, ensuring that survivors are listened to and supported throughout. The group currently includes 16 members, allowing for flexibility so that individuals can get involved in areas that interest them, without needing to commit to every meeting.

We have continued to keep the group structured in a way that minimises additional pressure, with most work completed during meeting time where possible. The group has contributed to a range of work this year, including developing in-person sessions, shaping podcast ideas and topics, and supporting the development of policy and guidance to strengthen how we work with survivors.

2.8 General Survivor Engagement

Throughout the year, we have continued to carry out one-to-one engagement with survivors. This has included keeping individuals up to date on our work, particularly in relation to communications, and creating space for them to share feedback on their experiences and where improvements could be made.

We have also responded to survivors who have contacted us directly, often through general enquiries. In many cases, colleagues in the operations team will liaise with the Engagement Lead where it feels more appropriate for us to have a conversation, ensuring survivors are supported in a more tailored and sensitive way. Through this, we have been able to offer more personalised

engagement, including providing updates where possible and helping individuals better understand their position within the process.

This ongoing, individual engagement continues to be an important way for us to build trust, respond to concerns, and ensure survivors feel heard and supported.

2.9 Podcasts

This year we developed a new form of communication: our podcast series. The idea behind developing this came from a survivor video which was created the previous year in which two survivors had a long conversation which was very difficult to edit down. We thought that long conversation may be something which would be beneficial for survivors to enable them to hear more in-depth information about certain parts of the scheme but with the ability to dip in and out of the information and listen to it when and wherever they want. This has been developed as part of our wider improvements to accessibility of information.

This year we have recorded 3 podcasts. The first episode was recorded with Joanna McCreadie and focused on the history of Redress Scotland and what the organisation looked like in the early stages and how it has grown. We then recorded an episode with Sara Szeliuski, the Network Manager, from the Redress Support Service. The third episode that was recorded was with Andrew Bryers and Kirsty Christie from the operations team and they discussed how panels operate and what some of the different roles are within Redress Scotland.

The feedback on the podcasts has been excellent and survivors we have spoken to have said they found them very informative and that they felt it was good to hear in-depth information about the subjects discussed.

The podcasts are available on all relevant platforms.

2.10 Working with Survivors Policy and Guidance

This year, the Engagement Lead and the Knowledge and Research Lead developed our *Working with Survivors* guidance, to further support the Working with Survivors Policy.

The aim was not only to strengthen the consistency and quality of our work with survivors, but also to better recognise and respond to the impact this work can have on staff themselves. We know that working closely with survivors can be incredibly meaningful, but also emotionally demanding, so a key focus has been on helping staff to look after their own wellbeing while continuing to provide compassionate, survivor-centred support.

The guidance complements the policy by offering practical, accessible advice that staff can apply day to day. In particular, it places strong emphasis on maintaining healthy personal and professional boundaries, helping staff feel confident about what those boundaries look like, why they matter, and how to uphold them in complex or sensitive situations. It also encourages reflection, self-awareness, and the use of supervision and peer support as part of staying well in the role.

3. What we are doing well

Over the past year, we've continued to grow and strengthen our engagement with survivors. We've created more opportunities for people to get involved in our work, whether that's through sessions, one-to-one conversations, or contributing to specific pieces of work. This has helped us hear from a wider range of voices and ensure survivors are shaping what we do in a meaningful way.

We've also introduced new ways for survivors to hear about our work, including developing a podcast as an additional communication channel. This has given us a different and more accessible way to share information and explore topics that matter to survivors.

We're seeing positive feedback about the environments we create, with survivors telling us they feel safe, listened to, and able to speak openly. This continues to be a real strength and something we are committed to maintaining.

Alongside this, we've strengthened how we respond to individual survivors. Through closer working with the operations team, we're able to connect with people who reach out through general enquiries and offer more tailored, supportive conversations where needed.

We're also continuing to build strong relationships with survivors over time. By staying open, approachable, and available to talk at any stage of their journey, we're creating consistent and meaningful connections.

We have also made strong progress in developing our paid participation approach. Introducing a clear policy has been an important step in recognising the value of survivors' time and input, and we are encouraged by how this has been received so far. We look forward to gathering further feedback over the next year to understand how it is working in practice and where it can continue to improve.

4. What we need to do differently

While we've made good progress this year, there are still areas where we can continue to improve. One of the main challenges has been ensuring we have a wider and more diverse range of survivors involved in our engagement work. Although we've created more opportunities to take part, attendance at some sessions has been lower than expected, and we know we need to do more to reach people who may face barriers to getting involved. This includes thinking more creatively about how and when we run sessions, and offering a mix of in-person and virtual options to make participation more accessible.

We also want to build on how we communicate opportunities to get involved, making sure information is clear, timely, and reaches as many people as possible. This links to continuing to grow trust and confidence, particularly with survivors who may not have engaged with us before.

As we begin to embed our paid participation policy, it will be important to keep listening to feedback and learning from how it works in practice. We want to make sure the process feels straightforward, fair, and genuinely recognise the value of people's contributions.

Another area for improvement is making our resources more accessible. We want to ensure that information is easy to understand and available in a range of formats, including easy read documents and videos with sign language interpretation. This will help remove barriers and make it easier for more survivors to engage with our work in a way that suits their needs.

5. Conclusion and next steps

Overall, we have continued to build on the positive progress we made during 2025-26, however, there is still more we can do especially in relation to accessibility.

Over the next year we will have a clear focus as we will be responding to our accessibility review report and recommendations. We will continue to be open and transparent about how the feedback we receive during our engagement work is used, ensuring that it helps to improve the work that we deliver across Redress Scotland.

5.1 Next steps

Throughout 2026/27, we will continue to deliver a wide range of engagement activities, both internally and externally. As set out in our business plan, we have committed to delivering at least six direct engagement sessions with survivors over the year. Two of these sessions will be more generic information sessions, through the Survivor Forum and four of these will be small group

engagement sessions. A key priority for us with our small group engagement sessions is to keep these sessions small and focused, creating a space where people feel comfortable giving their feedback and perspectives on our work. We already have plans in place for sessions on topics such as clarifying questions, the in-person meeting process, and a follow-up discussion on the letters survivors receive. By structuring sessions in this way, we hope to build a better understanding of how our processes are experienced in practice and identify where changes or improvements could make a meaningful difference.

Accessibility will also be a strong focus for us over the coming year. We are looking forward to welcoming a new team member with a dedicated focus on this area, which will allow us to take a more proactive approach. This will help us strengthen our engagement with survivors and organisations who have specific accessibility needs, and importantly, give us more opportunity to listen and adapt how we work. We want to ensure that our engagement is genuinely inclusive and that people can participate in ways that work for them.

We will also continue to grow the Redress Scotland Voices podcast, which has already proved a valuable way of sharing insight into our work. Several new episodes have already been recorded for 2026-2027 and are ready to be released. These include conversations with survivors who speak openly about their experiences, as well as episodes with panel members who provide more detail on decision-making processes and what panel sitting days involve. By sharing these perspectives, we hope to offer greater transparency and help demystify the work we do, making it more accessible and understandable for survivors.

Alongside this, we will maintain a working relationship with the Scottish Government's Survivor Relations Team, particularly in supporting the ongoing work of the Survivor Forum. We will continue to contribute to the Scottish Government's newsletter, which is shared with forum members. This provides a useful channel to keep people informed about upcoming engagement opportunities, as well as a way for survivors to express interest and sign up to take part.

Paid participation will also be a key feature of our approach this year. We are committed to recognising the time, input and expertise that survivors bring, and will offer payment for a range of engagement opportunities. This will include participation in small group engagement sessions, supporting the development of video content, and contributing to other engagement activities as they arise. We will regularly seek feedback from those involved to understand how this approach is working in practice and to make adjustments where needed, ensuring that participation feels fair, supportive and worthwhile.

Finally, we will actively embed our *Working with Survivors* guidance across the team. This will continue to support staff in their day-to-day work, particularly in maintaining appropriate boundaries, looking after their own wellbeing, and delivering engagement in a safe, thoughtful and consistent way.