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# Quality Assurance and Improvement - Annual Report 2024–2025

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## **Introduction**

Redress Scotland is committed to ensuring that as a learning organisation we focus on, and support, quality assurance and continuous improvement. In September 2023 we introduced our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework. As we have developed as an organisation we see our work on quality assurance and improvement not as separate, or in addition to how we work, but as an integral part of what we do and how we do it.

This means that we don't wait for formal assessments as part of our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework process(es) to review, assess, test, and make improvements. Taking this approach enables us to combine our approach to efficiency and effectiveness with quality assurance and improvement work whilst ensuring that any changes that we make are aligned with our mission and values.

We have some key principles which support this approach:

- getting it right first time is always more efficient and effective;
- delivering efficiency and effectiveness is a shared responsibility across everyone in Redress Scotland;
- a positive focus on being a learning organisation drives efficiency and effectiveness; and
- we are working on an ongoing process of improving efficiency and effectiveness with the aim of achieving excellence.

We therefore see things like errors, panel observations, self-evaluation, business planning sessions, as important contributors to our journey of improvement and increasing efficiency.

Due to limited resourcing in the Policy and Improvement team in 2024 this report covering 2024/25 has been drafted during the 2025/26 reporting period. All the activities undertaken have given us an opportunity to reflect on how well we are doing, identify areas for improvement, and where appropriate have enabled us to develop and implement changes that have led to improvements.

We remain committed to being a learning organisation that places quality, improvement, survivor experience and robust governance at the centre of everything we do. Building on the foundations established in 2023–24, this reporting year has involved a further maturing of our processes, governance arrangements, operational systems and quality assurance activity.

## **Reporting for 2024-25**

During 2024–25, the organisation continued to embed the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework introduced the previous year. This has been applied across our key areas of governance, operations, people, finance, and policy & improvement. Continuous improvement has been supported through ongoing self-evaluation, risk-based reviews, operational redesign, and closer engagement with survivors.

This report summarises the work that has taken place through 2024–25 under the themes of governance and assurance; survivor experience and communication; risk management; operational delivery; quality assurance; and organisational design and workforce wellbeing. It reflects what we did, what we are doing well, and what we need to improve, using learning generated through our quality and efficiency activity.

## **What We Did**

Across 2024–25, Redress Scotland undertook a substantial programme of work aligned with our organisational values and commitment to continuous improvement.

### **Governance, Assurance & Committee Evaluation**

We carried out extensive governance activity, including ARAC and Oversight Board self-evaluations, a full governance reporting evaluation, and a review of terms of reference for both committees. Risk mapping was undertaken to consolidate assurance sources, and horizon risks were introduced into the Strategic Risk Register. Internal audit work continued with multiple audits completed, and assurance processes were strengthened through more rigorous planning and deeper scrutiny of policies and performance.

## **Survivor Communication, Complaints and Engagement**

We introduced new transparent communication approaches, including clearer information on waiting times and queue positions. A revised approach to standard letters was implemented and the website was updated to better support survivors. A comprehensive complaints and positive feedback review was completed, and an in-depth survivor engagement session was held focusing on communication and information needs.

## **Risk Management and Internal Control**

We completed a full organisational risk-mapping exercise, expanded deep-dive analysis of key risks, and developed five new horizon risks to support long-term planning. Workshops were held with ARAC and Oversight Board members to strengthen understanding and application of risk. Internal audit activity continued to provide insight and assurance.

## **Operational Delivery: Scheduling, Processes & PSC Review**

We undertook several operational reviews. Scheduling processes were redesigned, templates updated, pre-panel and post-panel workflows improved, and Panel Support Co-ordinator roles adjusted following time-in-motion analysis. Larger application pack management was revised, and new processes were developed for pre-panel queries, communication with survivors, and post-panel quality checks.

## **Quality Assurance and Decision-Making**

A new Quality Assurance Lead was appointed. We developed an enhanced Quality Assurance processes to audit pre-panel, sitting-day and post-panel work. Work continued to maintain very low material error rates with a review of our approach and practice undertaken. Practice notes, templates, and guidance were updated through the Practice Development Group.

## **Organisational Design, Efficiency & Workforce Wellbeing**

A holistic review of organisational efficiency and effectiveness was carried out, examining resourcing, design, decision-making processes and operational delivery. We continued to strengthen wellbeing frameworks, reflective practice, induction, training and appraisal systems. An efficiency and effectiveness working group was established to consider

potential improvements following the outcome of the capacity business case.

## **What We Are Doing Well**

### **Governance and Assurance**

Feedback from committee members indicates that Redress Scotland has matured significantly as a public body. Governance reporting is clear, meetings support constructive discussion, and there is a strong mix of skills among members. Risk mapping and horizon scanning have enhanced our strategic foresight. Internal audits provide substantial assurance in key areas, confirming the robustness of our control environment.

### **Survivor Experience and Communication**

Improvements in transparency, particularly clearer information about queue positions and waiting times for survivors, have reduced complaints even as demand rose. Survivors have told us directly that they valued the honesty, clarity and tone of our letters and communication, tell us they felt heard and supported. Engagement sessions throughout the year confirmed that our trauma-informed communication approach is effective and working well.

### **Risk Management**

The introduction of horizon risks and assurance mapping demonstrates a strengthened approach to governance. Workshops and deep dives have improved understanding of risks across committees and management. Internal audit outcomes show that risk management processes are well-established and effective.

### **Operational Delivery**

The Operations team, including panel support coordinators, demonstrated adaptability and a strong commitment to improvement. Scheduling improvements have increased the number of applications allocated per sitting day. Standardised templates, clearer communication processes with survivors, and better distribution of workload have improved effectiveness across the application journey with Redress Scotland.

## **Quality Assurance and Decision-Making**

Material error rates remain extremely low, reflecting sustained commitment to accuracy and high-quality decision-making. New Quality Assurance processes allow assessment of the full application journey, and training, templates and practice notes have made preparation and decision-making more consistent and efficient. “Right first time” remains a strong organisational principle.

## **Workforce, Culture & Wellbeing**

Redress Scotland continues to benefit from a strong culture centred on dignity, respect and compassion. Staff and panel members reported high engagement and commitment to survivors. Wellbeing frameworks, particularly relating to vicarious trauma, are well embedded and effective. With continued support provided through group reflective sessions and 1-2-1 reflective sessions.

## **What We Need to Do Differently**

### **Governance and Strategic Focus**

We need to continue formalising governance processes, including planning cycles and survivor influence in strategic decision-making. Meeting formats may require updating and overlap between committees should be reviewed to ensure best use of time and capacity. Strengthening long-term financial modelling will be essential. Continue to consider whether we are able to develop and implement the Survivor Voice Advisory Group.

### **Survivor Communication and Waiting Times**

Despite improvements, waiting times remain significantly longer than survivors expect. Continued focus is required to address this, including clearer communication about delays and more frequent individual updates. Survivors want more detailed information on processes and decisions, requiring additional work on clarity and accessibility. Continue to consider whether we are able to develop and implement the Survivor Voice Advisory Group as a need for additional resources was identified and a business case was presented but not successful due to budget constraints.

## **Risk Management**

Further refinement is needed in the monitoring of horizon risks and the integration of long-term considerations into strategic planning. Some risk-rating processes require greater consistency, and business continuity work must be strengthened following limited assurance findings.

## **Operational Delivery and Process Efficiency**

While significant progress has been made, operational pressures persist. Application complexity and increased demand require continued refinement of scheduling, pre-panel processes, and post-panel work. Additional automation, such as, a case management system would reduce manual processes and improve consistency. Larger application packs continue to challenge capacity and will need ongoing consideration and focus.

## **Quality Assurance**

There is a need to reduce duplication within Quality Assurance processes and further embed new full-journey audit models. Survivor insight should be more consistently integrated into Quality Assurance learning loops. Decision-making trials require further testing and cost analysis before wider implementation.

## **Workforce Capacity & Resourcing**

The refusal of the capacity business case means that improvements this year will largely produce marginal gains rather than address underlying structural capacity challenges. Workload remains high across the organisation, but particularly within the Operations Team, and panel preparation time continues to stretch panel member capacity. A more fundamental organisational design review may be needed to sustain performance over the lifetime of the scheme.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

2024–25 has been a year of consolidation, significant operational improvement, strengthened governance, and continued commitment to survivor-centred practice. The organisation has matured in its systems, thinking and delivery, supported by robust quality assurance and improvement activity.

However, increasing demand, application complexity, and extended waiting times continue to place pressure on survivors, staff and systems. Without additional capacity, many improvements will yield only incremental gains. Continued focus on survivor voice and engagement, transparency, operational efficiency and governance development will be essential.

## **Recommendations for 2025–26**

- **Deepen survivor engagement**, ensuring communication improvements reflect survivor needs and preferences with a particular focus on accessibility.
- **Further develop governance processes**, enhancing survivor influence at strategic level.
- **Strengthen long-term planning**, including financial modelling, improvements to business planning and horizon risk oversight.
- **Implement planned operational improvements**, particularly in scheduling, Quality Assurance and PSC processes.
- **Advance work on system automation**, including the case management system business case.
- **Continue strengthening wellbeing frameworks**, supporting staff exposed to high levels of trauma material.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout 2024-2025 we have demonstrated resilience, adaptability and a strong commitment to continuous improvement during a challenging year. It saw increased outputs achieved, without additional budget, supported by our work on efficiency and effectiveness. The organisation's culture of dignity, respect and compassion remains evident across every layer of its work.

Redress Scotland remains committed to being an open, transparent and values-driven public body that places survivors at the heart of our work. The improvements made this year, and those planned for the next, reflect our dedication to high-quality, fair and compassionate decision-making.

Overall, we enter 2025–26 with a more robust governance and operational foundation, a clearer picture of its risks, an enhanced culture of communication and learning, and a strengthened commitment to survivors. The work undertaken provides a strong platform for continued development, deeper engagement and sustained improvement.