
Quality Assurance and Improvement Annual Report 2025–2026



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 not as separate, or additional to how we work, it is 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).

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.

This report covers our activities over 2025/26. All of 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. This reporting year has involved building on our approach to efficiency and effectiveness focussing on our operational systems and quality assurance activity.

Reporting for 2025-26

This report summarises the work that has taken place through 2025–26 under the themes of: Operational Efficiency; Quality Assurance; Digital Improvements; Organisational Efficiency Opportunities; Joint Work with the Scottish Government; and Governance Improvements. 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 2025–26, Redress Scotland undertook a substantial programme of work aligned with our organisational values and commitment to continuous improvement.

Operational Efficiency

During 2025–26, Redress Scotland continued to implement and test efficiency proposals flowing from the evaluation work undertaken during 2024-25. Actions included: testing reductions in Panel Support Co-ordinator support during sitting days, trialling changes to panel written minutes for fixed payment applications and next of kin applications, two person panel trials, introducing a new process for pre-panel queries, introducing a new approach to reconvened panels, changing our approach to large application packs and work to support preparation time for panel members. These actions were undertaken during 2025–26 as part of our wider approach to efficiency and effectiveness with a staged approach to implementation and testing.

Quality Assurance

We reviewed our approach(es) to Quality Assurance with a view to assessing how efficient and effective they were. We trialled a 1 stage Quality Assurance process for applications where the decision is unlikely to be challenged by the applicant. This 1 stage Quality Assurance process focussed on specific applications, such as, fixed payments, Next of Kin, and Nominated Beneficiary.

We also finalised the review of our observer guidance, recognising that the observation of sitting panels supports the review, evaluation and improvement of the wider decision-making processes. In addition to the observation of a full sitting day, we have introduced complete audit trails of the process of managing individual applications, to provide additional quality assurance and improvement opportunities, with a particular focus on applications where a previous criminal conviction has been declared.

Digital Improvements

During the year we explored further opportunities to make digital improvements, including evaluating case management systems, starting discussions with the Digital Directorate, exploring technological processes to streamline panel preparation, and assessing digital efficiencies more broadly.

Organisational Efficiency Opportunities

As already set out above a key focus for 2025-26 has been efficiency and effectiveness with a new Efficiencies and Effectiveness Working Group being established. The group was set up as a working forum for both panel members, team members and non-executives to consider potential improvements that increase efficiency and effectiveness and are fit for purpose.

Joint Work with the Scottish Government

Collaborative work continued in key areas with Scottish Government, such as modelling across the scheme, a focus on reducing clarifying questions, improving handling of applications with previous convictions, developing new application forms, and discussions about how to improve the process of handling applications where previous relevant convictions have been declared.

Governance Improvements

A full review of the official documents, reports and policy register was completed. The system was streamlined, outdated entries were removed, and future review requirements were aligned to governance cycles. A new oversight process was established involving the Head of Policy and Improvement, Governance Secretary and Knowledge & Research Lead. The introduction of a survivor voice advisory group was revisited by the Oversight Board and based on additional resource being available the development and implementation has been agreed.

What we are doing well

Operational Efficiency

Redress Scotland have developed a structured efficiency action plan that balances potential resource savings with risk-controlled testing. We have taken a proportionate approach by trialling changes in lower-risk application types (e.g., fixed payment applications). Improvements to the

panel record for sitting days requiring 2 panel members has increased the number of applications considered from 6 to 8, and our work on large application packs has led to 2 additional applications per sitting increasing decisions per month by approx. 6-8 decisions. We have taken a mature approach by openly evaluating risks and ensuring across the organisation people are informed before changes are implemented.

Building on the experience in two person panels, we have begun extending the approach to reconvened panels to allow for these to be managed more effectively efficiently and at less cost. We continue to gather data about the effectiveness of this implementation.

We have also developed a new approach to managing larger application packs to allow for a greater number of determinations within these sitting days. The focus is on longer lead times for preparation for panel members and has resulted in an additional 2 decision being taken with each of these sitting days.

Throughout the process survivors and the impact of any changes on them have been a key consideration. This can be seen in the improvements that have enabled more decisions on applications to be made, lowering the cost per decision, the work on pre-panel queries, and larger application packs.

Quality Assurance

Redress Scotland has taken a cautious and evidence based approach, piloting changes rather than fully replacing existing quality assurance systems. Updated observation guidance and an improved audit approach to observations align with our approach to efficiency while maintaining oversight.

Digital Improvements

Redress Scotland has made progress in assessing the viability of digital solutions that could support case management automation and reduce manual tasks. Engagement with the Digital Directorate is a positive step and there is a recognition that as we use Scottish Government IT systems, we need to align any digital tool with Scottish Government standards, survivor data protection and adhere to our records management plan. We have also developed podcasts, which will be launched in 2026/27, that are a digital solution supporting the work we are undertaking to make sure how we communicate is accessible.

Organisational Efficiency Opportunities

Redress Scotland has demonstrated openness to innovative efficiency options, including collaboration with external experts and cross-team working. Workforce restructuring proposals and continued discussions highlight the unpredictable nature of the flow of work. The monitoring of cost per decision continues to support transparency and accountability. Embedding efficiencies into the forthcoming Corporate Plan will strengthen our continued commitment to efficiency, effectiveness and quality assurance.

Joint Work with the Scottish Government

Collaboration with RRR Division and the Sponsor Team is well established and productive. There have been ongoing discussions throughout the year about joint operational improvements, aligning strongly with survivor experience aims. There has also been a proactive approach to how we work efficiently focussing on reducing issues before they reach panel stage.

We continually work to try and improve understanding of application throughput across the scheme to enable us to achieve higher levels of decision making.

Governance Improvements

We now have a much clearer, well managed governance record. The new review process ensures OSB and ARAC only consider relevant official documents. The approach promotes transparency, alignment across teams, and consistency in sign-off processes.

What we need to do differently

Operational Efficiency

Given that many proposals carry medium to high risk, particularly around quality, complaints, and survivor confidence, future changes must be more heavily informed by survivor centred feedback. Continued testing and modelling is also needed to ensure that any further planned efficiency and effectiveness changes do not result in increased, reduction in the quality of decisions or an increase in clarifying questions.

It is clear that any remaining identified improvements will generate only marginal gains without broader capacity increases. Clarifying questions remain a substantial efficiency challenge. We must ensure that pre-panel

and post-panel planned changes to processes do not create additional workload elsewhere in the process. Larger application pack changes need careful monitoring to avoid overburdening panel members.

In the coming year Redress Scotland will be undertaking a significant growth process, and it is important that ongoing improvement work is focused on maintaining quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

Quality Assurance

Several proposals, particularly removing Quality Assurance checks or significantly reducing observation, carry high risks, including reduced insight into panel performance and quality issues going unidentified. As such, we should ensure any reduction in Quality Assurance is backed by strong data and survivor assurance.

Digital Improvements

Digital options still require additional exploration and planning, with clear cost-benefit analysis. Redress Scotland must develop a more detailed business case and consider long-term maintenance and data-security implications. Technology-based streamlining of certain aspects of the application process could carry the risk of introducing material errors, meaning digital solutions should be rigorously tested before implementation. A clear digital roadmap would reduce resource waste and improve strategic alignment.

Organisational Efficiency Opportunities

A strong prioritisation mechanism is needed to prevent the Efficiencies and Effectiveness Group from generating low-value actions.

Joint Work with the Scottish Government

Although collaborative processes are well-established, the areas of work identified will not produce major efficiency gains unless accompanied by additional resources, structural improvements and a need to match output.

Governance Improvements

Given the Oversight Boards commitment to actively listen to survivors, acting on what they say, and being accessible and transparent in order to receive survivor feedback it is pertinent that we now develop and implement a survivor voice advisory group.

Conclusion and Recommendations

2025–26 has been a year of significant evaluation, with a clear focus on efficiency and effectiveness, operational redesign and continued governance strengthening. Redress Scotland continues to balance the pressures of increasing demand with a strong commitment to survivors, quality, and our public-body responsibilities.

The work undertaken this year has strengthened organisational insight, resilience and capability, and provides a strong foundation for future improvement. By continuing to prioritise survivor experience, invest in quality assurance, and pursue well-designed efficiency measures, Redress Scotland will continue to make high-quality robust decisions.

Recommendations for 2026–27

- **Operational efficiencies** are assessed through a survivor impact lens before implementation.
- **Expand engagement activities** so survivors can shape decisions about governance, communication, and operational improvements.
- **Continue exploring workforce restructuring** options to increase operational capacity within existing resources, and opportunities for additional resources.
- **Maintain monitoring of cost per decision** and use this data to inform resource planning and forecasting discussions with Scottish Government.
- **Strengthen cross-team working** and prioritise work that delivers measurable benefit rather than small marginal gains.

Conclusion

During 2025–26, we have continued to strengthen our position as a learning organisation committed to high-quality decision-making, robust governance, with a clear focus on survivor experience. Building on the significant work we have already undertaken in previous years, this last year saw an intensified focus on operational efficiency, digital capability, collaborative working, and governance improvements. The efficiencies and effectiveness working group, established after the outcome of the 2024 capacity business case, has played a central role in this work. It brought together a wide range of people from across the organisation to consider a broad range of operational and strategic improvements.

Across the organisation, there has been meaningful progress in analysing operational processes, trialling new approaches, and refining systems. The work we have undertaken continues to demonstrate that we are an organisation committed to improving survivor experience while maintaining quality.

Many of the actions explored this year carried risks, particularly where they could influence the quality or consistency of decision-making. We were careful to test changes in lower-risk areas, but if we are to continue to focus on our work on efficiency and effectiveness, we need to ensure any efficiencies do not introduce unintended consequences such as increased complaints, clarifying questions, or impact on survivors. We must recognise that the increased application numbers and ongoing waiting-time pressures continue to challenge our overall performance and survivor experience.

Overall, we have demonstrated resilience and a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Redress Scotland's culture, values and focus on survivors remain at the centre of its work. The year's activities provide a strong foundation for continued improvement in 2026–27, particularly in areas such as survivor engagement, digital development, and operational improvements.