

**Meeting:** Redress Scotland Oversight Board

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026 0930-1230

**Location:** Online via MS Teams

**Minuted by:** Diane Piper (DP)

### **In attendance**

- Kirsty Darwent (KD) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Chair)
- Bill Matthews (WM) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Deputy Chair, Audit Risk and Assurance Committee Chair)
- Colin Spivey (CS) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Member, ARAC Member)
- Paul Edie (PE) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Member)
- Neil Mackay(NM) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Member, ARAC Member)
- Roy McComb(RM) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Member)
- Joanna McCreadie(JM) (Redress Scotland Chief Executive)
- Gary Gallacher (GG) (Redress Scotland Head of Operations)
- Michael Stevens (Head of Finance and Resources)
- Michelle Nairn (MN) (Redress Scotland Head of People)
- Melanie Lowe (ML) (Redress Scotland Head of Policy & Improvement)
- Andrew Freeburn(AF) (Redress Scotland Oversight Board Member Panel Member)

### **Apologies;**

- None

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## **Agenda item 1. Welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest and appoint Survivor Voice**

KD opened the meeting welcoming all present. A special welcome was extended to AK, who was recently appointed as a full member to the board.

There were no apologies.

RM was appointed the survivor voice for the duration of the meeting.

Members were invited to raise any conflicts of interest which they may be aware of. KD noted that all non executives, except for CS, have an interest in the potential pay increase incorporated into the budget.

## **Agenda item 2. Minutes of the previous meetings**

### **2.1 Draft minutes of the previous meeting 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

These were approved with no changes.

### **2.2 Draft minute from the self evaluation exercise 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

These were approved with no changes.

## **Agenda item 3. Matters Arising – Action Log**

The action log / work plan was discussed in detail and updates recorded.

The revised action log will be circulated along with the minutes from this meeting.

## **Agenda item 4. Report from the Chair**

KD updated board members of her activity since the November 2025 meeting.

The training of new panel members is now complete. KD expressed her gratitude to JM and GG for the delivery of an excellent training and induction programme for new panel members. Feedback from those involved was that it was very challenging but also very rewarding. The ready to practise meetings are almost complete and 9 new panel members will be scheduled for panels from the end of March. KD noted it has taken a year to complete the appointment and on boarding of new panel members. A new recruitment campaign starts this week. This is expected to be an annual process.

The term of appointment for the first cohort of panel members is due to end this year. KD was pleased to note that except for one or two all the panel members would like their appointment to be extended. The supporting statements noted how panel members felt they were making a real difference to survivors.

KD and JM have met with Lady Smith of the Scottish Child Abuse Enquiry. Discussions included accessibility and sharing of information.

KD continues to observe panels and noted the increasing complexity around applicants with previous convictions. Panel members are working their way through this area.

Meetings have also taken place with JM, GG, and WM to look at the impact and challenges around the increase in budget for the coming financial year.

Members thanked KD for her report noting the work undertaken.

## **Agenda Item 5. Report from the Chief Executive**

### **5.1 Chief Executive's report**

JM advised that her report focuses on the work around the growth of Redress Scotland and how this can best be managed.

The senior management team and staff are incredibly busy. While the day-to-day work continues there has also been the intensive training of the new panel members. Additional development work has also commenced to underpin the growth of the organisation in the coming year.

Attention has been given to the impact of growth and the organisational design required to sustain that growth in future years. Multiple posts have been identified, and JM acknowledged the work of MN and the People Team. Infrastructure posts have been identified and recruitment is underway. Job descriptions have been completed and a process for recruitment started. The People Team will also grow to support the work of a larger organisation. Details of the new posts have been provided in the report and include a new resources role, the full extend of which is still to be determined.

The senior management team have been looking at each work area and will present a paper at the strategy day in March outlining the current structure and proposals for the future structure of the organisation.

Previous board meetings discussed the establishment of an advisory group of survivors which would feed into the governance structure. This was previously put on hold, but the feeling is that the time is right for this to be reconsidered.

JM highlighted new areas of work to be undertaken around communications. There is a concern that once the budget allocation is made public there will be an expectation of an immediate reduction in waiting times. There has also been some misinformation disseminated to survivors from third parties. This does fall into the remit of both Scottish Government and Redress Scotland. To address both these concerns JM is to meet Charlotte Street Partners with a view to engaging their services and expertise.

JM informed the board that a request has been received to prioritise a new application from a terminally ill survivor. The survivor has requested an emergency sitting day and decision. JM confirmed that priority is always given to those who are terminally ill and we must ensure fairness across the board to all applicants. It was further noted that prioritisation sits with the Chair of the board and as such it's helpful to come to the board for discussion.

Several questions were raised by members around the respective areas of responsibility in relation to misinformation. Members agreed that this should sit on the Redress Scotland risk register as a potential emerging risk. Members were concerned this information could be fraudulent and suggested an approach to our legal advisors for advice.

**Action JM to add misinformation to the risk register and to clarify our role and responsibility in this.**

Discussion continued around unconscious bias. JM noted that the analysis reflected different forms of bias and given that we have a small number of material errors this is not a major issue. KD added that what has been come to light is more cognitive bias, where clear shortcuts are made around decision making, rather than biases in terms of equality and diversification.

## **5.2 Dashboard Report**

JM noted that there has been good progress against all KPIs. 4000 applications have now been completed. The redress division continue to report a continuous rise in new applications. This information is useful to inform our future planning.

## **5.3 Corporate Plan**

ML presented the first draft of the Corporate Plan to the board. Previous work has been revised in light of the budget award. ML acknowledged that the paper still has typographic errors but felt it was useful at this stage to share with members for early feedback before further work is commenced.

ML continued that the draft includes work on the governance section signed off at the last meeting. Individual team aims have been considered and viewed from the perspective of the survivor. The revised plan will come back to the board again in March with the aim to publish later in the year. ML added that the draft is yet to be shared with survivors.

Members thanked ML for bringing this to the attention at this stage of development. Several suggestions were made for consideration

- As this is our second plan it was suggested that the changes to the organisation since inception should be included.
- In addition to survivors, the other stakeholders we have consulted with in the preparation of the plan could be identified.
- Consider if there are some metrics which could be included i.e. is there anything that drives our work e.g. the backlog.
- Include best value and the work of the equalities and efficiencies group.

- The opening statement should emphasise our commitment to survivors through engagement sessions.
- Include a section on the eventual closure of the scheme.
- The role of AI and social media.
- Include the work of the efficiencies and effectiveness group and the impact on waiting times.
- Add a section about cost per decision noting that it may fluctuate throughout the year depending on activity and recruitment.
- Audit Scotland are looking at value for money; we should reflect current language and expectation in our plan.

KD summarised the discussion noting that this was an excellent start to the three-year plan. There will be a further opportunity at the strategy day for further analysis. There is general enthusiasm for wider consultation, but it was noted that there's no formal statutory requirement for this.

The Board were content to accept the work and content as presented noting comments would be considered.

#### **5.4 Efficiencies and effectiveness report**

GG advised that a number of items previously identified by the efficiencies and effectiveness group are concluding.

40% of reconvened panels have moved to less intensive work resulting in a greater number of sitting days and an increase in the number of decisions.

Several practical tools for large applications have been identified and shared with panel members.

The complexity around applications from survivors with convictions takes the longest time and can often involve several meetings. A trial is underway whereby the panel chairs undertake the preparatory work and seek paperwork and clarification in advance of the sitting day.

Going forward some efficiencies may no longer be relevant e.g. there are 18 applications suitable for a two person panel, but we are now entering into a new financial year, and these will be concluded.

Going forward into the new year work will continue but be iterative and responsive to the growing organisation.

AF noted that he has 12 top tips which can make a big difference for panel members in their work. JM advised that panel members share lots of good practice and these will

be discussed at the Practice Development Group. The opportunity continues for peer-to-peer support, and this is felt the best way to share best practise.

The lack of quantitative information within the report was also noted and there was general agreement that a few key metrics would add to the impact of the changes made.

KD noted that this was a working paper and further updates will include where possible some quantitative information.

## **Agenda item 6 Governance and Risk**

### **6.1 Draft minute from ARAC meeting 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2026**

WM summarise the key points from this meeting.

The committee welcomed James Mollison, the recent panel member appointment to the committee.

WM highlighted a duplicate action around business continuity which sits in both the ARAC and Oversight Board work plan. ARAC focus at the meeting included a deep dive into business continuity where lots of good work was evidenced but it was also noted that further work was to be done. Our internal auditors are currently undertaking a review in this area with results of the audit to be available at the April meeting and shared at the risk workshop with members of the Oversight Board members.

Two audits have been undertaken, Business Planning where reasonable assurance was provided. There was one recommendation from TIAA, to include SWOT and PESTLE analysis. Substantial assurance was obtained on Budgetary control and internal financial reporting, with no recommendations.

WM closed his update by thanking the finance team for all their work.

## **Agenda item 7 Finance and Procurement**

### **7.1 Period 10 Management Accounts**

MS presented the period 10 management accounts to the board adding that there was nothing substantial to note. As we enter the final month of the financial year the plan is to reduce the number of panel sitting days thereby providing a margin of safety to ensure we come in at the end of the year under budget.

## **7.2 Draft Budget 2026/27**

JM open this item reminding members that this was first brought to the board in November where 3 options were presented. The third option of £8.5 million was subsequently awarded in January. Following notification of the award a meeting was called with all board members on the 12th of February to discuss the impact on the organisation. JM thanked board members for their contributions at this meeting. The board had acknowledged the difficulty in planning for this level of growth and were content to adopt an iterative approach to the changes which have to take place to support the growth.

In terms of the detail MS noted that a number of substantial changes have already been incorporated, most significant being the pay award. Of the £8.5 million awarded £400k is for the development of a CRM and investigation into the use of AI. A high level split of the budget shows 89% going on staff costs and 11% on non staff costs. MS noted that the non staff costs also include for temporary staff and £30k for communications.

Members were supportive of the direction of travel and were happy to wait until a more detailed plan is forthcoming before committing substantial sums to specific areas. The key challenge identified is for the cost per decision to come down and for an increase in number of decisions made. Members were supportive, in principle, of investment in IT but requested that more detail be obtained before approval is given.

JM reiterated that work is ongoing and papers will be developed and shared at the strategy day in March. Adopting an iterative approach will allow for data to be developed amended and shared throughout the year.

KD summarised the discussion noting the general support and approval of the draft budget in principle and the adoption of an iterative approach. Modelling will be undertaken and added to future reports as the year unfolds.

In terms of the recommendation to an increase in the daily rate for panel members and non executives this will go to Scottish Government for approval.

The draft minute from the board meeting to discuss the budget held on the 12th of February was approved subject to a wording amendment from NM.

**Action NM to forward wording change to DP.**

## **Agenda Item 8 People**

### **8.1 Health and Safety – annual risk assessment**

MN spoke to the annual health and safety report submitted in the papers. MN added that our contract with Worknest is now complete and a new provider has already started work to review our policy and processes is. There are no actions at this stage and a further six months update will be provided to the board.

The board acknowledged the excellent report which supports the work which sits behind it.

## **8.2 Staff Code of Conduct**

The staff code of conduct was updated as part of our regular review process. ML has strengthened the area on conflicts of interest particularly the detail around perceived conflicts. MN confirmed that we have a conflict register which also includes perceived risks. MN further added that the document is available to all members of staff but is not published on the website.

The document was approved and will move for implementation.

## **8.3 Whistleblowing**

MN confirmed to the board that there has been nothing raised under whistleblowing in the last 12 months. PE has confirmed he will stay on as champion for the forthcoming year.

## **Agenda Item 9 Forward Plan**

The detail contained within the forward plan was noted with no additions.

The strategy say will be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March at the offices of Children Hearings Scotland in Edinburgh. All members of the oversight board and ARAC are invited to attend. The main items for discussion will be an organisational review, survivor focus and the 2026/27 budget.

## **Agenda Item 10 New and emerging risks**

As mentioned previously the discussion around misinformation and communication will be added to the strategic risk register and will be discussed in detail at the April risk workshop.

Members also noted the complexity around budget management in the year ahead and acknowledged the role ARAC would have in helping to support growth.

## Agenda Item 11 Any other competent business

None

## Agenda Item 12 Review of Meeting and Survivor Voice

RM noted it was a very businesslike meeting however there were several areas discussed which impact on survivors

- The management of communications so as not to raise the expectations of survivors regarding waiting times
- The budget and the implication on survivors
- The concern around fraudulent misinformation which is in the public domain
- Scottish children child abuse inquiry has lots of messaging which we are taking into consideration in our planning for the future and management of waiting times
- Going forward focus will mean maintained on survivor engagement and how this can be developed over the coming year
- Members emphasised the need for clear and accessible flow of information to over survivors being mindful of not over promising what we can deliver

RM concluded that in all meetings the survivor is ever present in the room.

KD thanked everyone for their contributions today and confirmed that the next meeting.

## Actions arising from meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Action	Item	Actions	Lead	Progress
1.	5.1	JM to add misinformation to the risk register and to clarify our role and responsibility in this.	JM	
2.	7.2	NM to forward wording change to DP.	NM/DP	Complete