

**Meeting:** Redress Scotland Oversight Board

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025 0930-1530

**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)

### **Apologies;**

- None

### **By Invitation;**

- Brian Houston (BH) (Redress Scotland Panel Member)
- Mary McCallan (MM) (Redress Scotland Panel Member)

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

KD opened the meeting welcoming all present.

There were no apologies.

There were no board member conflicts of interest noted.

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

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

## **2.1 Draft minutes of the previous meeting 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to two amendments

- To record that RM experienced technical difficulties at this meeting resulting in gaps in his attendance.
- typing error on page 2 – Smyllum Orphanage.

**Action; Amendment to the minute of 15<sup>th</sup> of October to be actioned before publication. DP.**

## **2.2 Draft minute of meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to endorse the annual report and accounts were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

The action log / work plan was discussed in detail.

Action 24.25 to record savings around efficiency improvements was discussed in depth with JM noting that it was proving very difficult to calculate the savings through the efficiency work. What can be captured are productivity gains. The board agreed this was sufficient for now but recommended that a model be developed as it is expected that this information will be required in the future.

All other actions were accepted as updated as presented.

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

KD updated the board on her activity since the last meeting in October which included

- The continued observation of panels. KD noted that although this is reported on at every meeting it is still a significant part of the Chair activity to ensure panels are observed. There are always significant, novel, and contentious issues to be considered. KD added that the work of the panels continues to be exemplary.
- KD also attended the training of the new panel members and the workshop held prior to the annual general meeting. This was an excellent opportunity to hear and consider the work of panels.
- The AGM itself was exceptional with great input from internal and external speakers. All the presentations were useful particularly around restraint and penal institutions. KD expressed her thanks to the organisers of the event.

- JM and KD have met with Peter Murray and Maree Alison from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Both organisations share the same sponsorship unit.
- **New Board members**  
WM and KD met with James Mollison and Andy Freeburn, the two panel members who expressed an interest in sitting on the governance committees. James will join ARAC and Andy will join the Oversight Board. Both have very good experience in audit and risk and input at board level and will take up their new roles in January.

Members noted Chair activity.

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

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

### **5.2 Dashboard Report**

JM noted that the sector continues to be under pressure to make cost savings. For Redress Scotland that means continued focus on service delivery. The plan from government is to arrange public bodies into clusters and we will sit with the SSSC. This will provide opportunities for collaboration and to consider areas of shared service.

The four-day week pilot has now been closed, and the decision is not to take this forward.

Operations have been very busy as have Scottish Government. There has been an increase in the number of applications to the redress division and a decrease in the number of applications coming through to Redress Scotland. In the short term we can reduce waiting times however we are aware we are highly affected by throughput from Scottish Government.

A joint approach with Scottish Government has been made for additional funding but no decision has yet been made. Board members acknowledged that the pressure on government for funds is increasing.

The operations team are working well and beginning to see the results of the work on efficiencies. Together with continued hard work the number of completed applications in August was 143 rising to 153 in September and the number for October is 166.

There is generally good performance on most of the KPIs however we are unlikely to meet the KPI on absence. Full review of all KPIs will take place in early 2026.

Over the next few weeks there will be an increase to staffing with the appointment of two temporary panel support coordinators, one temporary HR officer to cover for sickness and one permanent operations manager. The operations manager has a background in social work and comes with a lot of experience, and we are looking forward to her joining the team.

Panel member training is underway for 15 new panel members. The training plan was revised and updated for the new intake and commenced with a knowledge test on the first day. A full evaluation will be undertaken at the end of the training currently underway.

The 2026 training plan for panel members is being prepared. There is also a proposal to refocus the work of the Practice Development Group and the Equalities and Efficiencies group. The increasing pressure on the work of these groups is resulting in lower progress in the completion of work. The proposal is to streamline activity and provide space for other work to progress i.e. applications from survivors with previous relevant convictions. The proposal will be discussed with the practice development group and the effectiveness and efficiencies group.

Approximately 19 panel member appointments are due to terminate in late 2026 with a further 7 in 2027. In January we will start a consultation process to see which of the panel members wish to be reappointed, but it is expected that we will need to embark on recruitment and panel member induction throughout 2026 and 2027.

Several engagement sessions with survivors have taken place which have been very well received.

The management of our budget continues to be tight, and we are pleased to be reporting only a 0.1% variance. We currently have no indication what the grant in aid will be for 2026. Three options will be presented to the board all of which incorporate cost increases which are out with our control.

In conclusion the organisation continues at a steady state with continuous improvement. The landscape for 2026/27 is still very much unknown however various scenarios have been considered and will be shared under the finance section of the meeting.

KD invited comment from the members. Key comments included;

Expected focus by Scottish Government on the total cost of the scheme. JM reported that the legal firms are promoting the scheme and have numbers of applications they are progressing.

As we are now more aware of our variable costs and the link to decisions. The board were comforted that should in year funding be received again we would be able to respond quickly and effectively.

In terms of the absence KPI it was considered better to stay outside the target figure rather than change it.

There was also discussion about other redress schemes and if there was any intelligence that could be gleaned from them. JM advised that we have met with several other schemes and they all reported a rush of applications in the final few months of the scheme.

The quality of applications from legal firms has been noted and We will follow through on the annual report recommendation to work to address this.

Members also asked about the potential for negative impact on panel members given the increase in panels undertaken by some individual members. GG noted that not all the panels were full days and the organisation is very focussed on the well-being support available for panel members. At the moment there has been no negative feedback on the amount of work they are undertaking.

### **5.3 Efficiencies and Effectiveness**

#### **5.3a Report on Efficiencies and Effectiveness**

GG presented a report on the work of the efficiencies and effectiveness group. Some of the implementations have been difficult to measure. We are seeing a reduction in time scales for fixed payments and hope to have more detailed information on this in the new year.

As previously mentioned, 166 decisions were made in October and for this coming month, we are projecting in the region of the high 150s decisions.

GG noted that all changes and trials have been fully supported by panel members who are keen to work with us to bring the queues down and provide the best decisions for survivors.

The next phase will be to push for the revised application pack to be rolled out and see if this addresses the issue of poorly prepared applications. Work is also due to commence on reconvened panels.

Panel members are considering the use of emails for decisions and are latterly working on preparation time to see what efficiencies can be made there. This is an area where most of the work takes place in preparation for the panel.

Members were pleased with the work to date and supportive of the next phase of improvements as presented. Members also noted how supportive panel members were to any changes and initiatives. PE noted that was very much a collaborative endeavour.

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

### **6.1 – Strategic Risk Register**

JM noted that all feedback from the last discussion has been included in the current version of the risk register.

The board thanked JM and a ML for the revised register. There was a question as to whether the challenge of the external factors has been captured. It was noted that there is always new information coming forward and that as an organisation we keep the risk register as live as possible reflecting the well-functioning risk management process in place.

Only one change was suggested in relation to cybersecurity should remove “very” from box Q14.

There was a noted risk around poorly prepared applications and work is ongoing to effect improvements in this area.

KD noted the amendments to the risk register which have been highlighted and will be actioned.

**Action; one minor amendments to risk register- change “very good” to “good,” Q14**

### **6.2 Business plan – 6-month update**

JM provided the six-monthly update on the business plan noting that there were a couple of amber items which may have to be carried forward into 2026. Overall, the management team are very pleased with the work done and the progress to date. Members were also pleased with the content of the business plan as presented and the progress made in all areas throughout the year.

### **6.3 Corporate plan – governance section and update on progress**

JM reminded the board that the governance section of the corporate plan was discussed at the last meeting. Suggestions made at that meeting have been incorporated with the reminder that this was still in draft. The plan was discussed yesterday at the full team meeting and will be updated and presented again to the board in 2026.

KD noted that it is through the corporate plan that we can influence the strategic direction of Redress Scotland.

Board members noted the progress to date and made the following suggestions;

- Include reference to our values
- Mention the role and influence of survivors on the governance of Redress Scotland
- Add the role of the accountable officer
- Continue to look at the terms of reference on a regular basis and cross check with the corporate plan

KD felt the plan was shaping up well and a reworked version will come back to the board early in the new year.

**Action; JM to incorporate changes as suggested.**

## **6.4 Report on Artificial Intelligence**

GG presented a report on artificial intelligence. This has been noted at several meetings and has also been raised by the efficiencies and effectiveness group to improve efficiency. The report highlights some of the areas currently under consideration.

There are several challenges which have been identified in particular the view of survivors to the use of AI; the practical aspect in terms of the varying skills and knowledge of users; access to the tools required to undertake this.

Members agreed this was the right time to start investigating the use of AI. There was a suggestion to link in with the Registers of Scotland who have embarked on this journey. There was unanimous agreement that the use of AI is to be limited to administrative tasks and should not be used in any form of decision making.

The board also acknowledged the need to training everyone within administration functions and SMT to have an awareness of how to use AI in the manipulate data. The cost of licences is a significant issue, and it will be useful to link into the Register of Scotland. It was further noted that AI is fallible and that there are still risks of mistakes, but the board were content to progress exploration at this stage.

There was a note of caution regarding our carbon footprint as the use of AI is quite heavy on energy. MS added that there are no licences available the initial pilot is now complete but there will be a period of review before further advice is forthcoming.

**Action; work in this area to continue with a draft policy and appraisal for approval to come to the Oversight Board at some point in 2026.**

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

### **7.1 Period 7 Management accounts**

MS presented the management accounts for Period 7- to the end of August. The year-to-date figures reflects a £1.9k variance underspend from budget reflecting a year-to-date percentage variance of 0.1%. Cash balances remain at four to six weeks of expenditure.

Board were pleased with forecasting and performance, and this was an excellent result given additional funding was awarded during the period.

### **7.2 Draft 2026/27 budget**

### **7.3 2025/26 Pay Award**

MS asked these papers to be taken together, the pay award and the 25/26 budget as they are interlinked.

There will be an increase in our costs of £100k due primarily to an 11% increase in salaries, covering a pay award and on costs. There is no increase provided for panel members or non-executives however these may be an increased during the period

MS continued that the proposed budget for 2026/27 outlines three options;

1. Based on the same award as this year. Considering the increase in salaries and other costs this would in effect reduce the number of decisions that could be made in the year £5.04m
2. Use the number of decisions this year and cost to deliver the same in 26/27-this would require a budget ask of £5.7m
3. A request for increased funds to reduce waiting list over 2 years - £8.5m

Also for consideration under each option is funding to explore AI £150k and a Case Management System £250k.

Members agreed that Option 1, with the reduction in the numbers of decisions in the year was not the preferred option. Option 2 was the preferred option with the

recommendation to reduce or remove the funds set aside for AI development as this is being explored elsewhere. There is still debate as to the potential advantages of a Case Management System balancing the cost and time for development and implementation with the efficiencies saved. Option 3 would be good to have however it was acknowledged that given other financial constraints this was unlikely to happen.

The board agreed to keep with a steady state of delivery and to hold back the CMS and investment in AI. It would be in the interest of survivors to reduce the number of applications and decisions we can process in any year. It was also noted that there would be the possibility of getting in year funding and that we should be prepared for this and be agile enough to step up operations if necessary.

**Action JM thanked the board for their recommendations and will speak to the sponsors team about option 2 highlighting the positive outcome for survivors if option 3 was awarded.**

**Board agreed to progress with the pay award for staff as recommended in the paper.**

## **Agenda Item 8 Policy and Improvement**

### **8.1 Official documents**

ML presented the paper outlining the process for review and update to the policy and official documents register schedule when necessary. There was some discussion over what would constitute a substantial change, and it was acknowledged this is often a grey area. KD suggested that anything more than wording comes to her for approval and that the decision is then made whether further scrutiny by the Oversight Board would be required. There is still a risk there, but a process is in place.

It was further noted that as the scheme goes on longer than initially anticipated there will be policies which will have to come back to the board usually on a three-year cycle. The board recommended that future reports highlight period between review.

**Action-ML to highlight those policies which will be returning on a three-year basis and those which will return annually for scrutiny and approval.**

### **8.2 Paid Participation Policy**

M L advised that the approach to this was approved previously. The policy has been drafted with a view to make appropriate payment to survivors engaged and supporting the focus groups and the work on engagement. Legal advice has been sought from Harper MacLeod in the drafting of the policy. ML also advised that there is a separate line in the budget for paid participation next year.

There was discussion over what would be considered as equal pay and who would we consider Survivors being equal to. Two actions were noted following, the first to apply a process so the work is shared equitably amongst Survivors we engage with and to define what equal means in terms of our policy.

The board were content to approve on this basis.

**Action; ML to develop a process so the work is shared equitably among Survivors and to define what “equal” means in terms of our policy.**

## **Agenda Item 9 People**

### **9.1 Overtime Claim Policy and Procedure**

MN presented this policy advising that it is aligned to the government policy. There was a question over if there has been any employee consultation to which MN advised that this was not considered necessary as it was completely aligned to government policy and had already been reviewed by the unions.

The board recommended approval but requested that MN have a conversation with unions to ensure that the formal process has been completed.

**Action; MN to consult with the unions to confirm compliance of the policy with current approved practice.**

## **Agenda Item 10 Forward Plan**

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

## **Agenda Item 11 New and emerging risks**

Nothing to add as full discussion had taken place under item 6.1.

## **Agenda Item 12 Any other competent business**

None

### **Agenda Item 13. Review of Meeting and Survivor Voice**

KD thanked those present for their contributions to the board meeting.

RM summarised the meeting and highlighted those areas where it was evident that survivors were key in the discussion.

- RM noted that the meeting was driven by our values. There was an in-depth discussion on the value added to the board through engagement with survivors.
- The decisions made at the meeting were focussed on reducing waiting times.
- The risk register was clearly underpinned by a full focus on survivors.
- The volume and quality of applications is causing delays- we have a limited responsibility to resolve this issue however we will keep doing what we can in this area.
- It was agreed during the discussions around AI that we are highly risk averse to AI in decision making.
- When looking at next year's budget all members agreed that we owe it to survivors to at least to maintain current levels but also to fight for survivors and for the resources to speed up the process.
- The discussion on participation was central to decision-making.

The meeting broke for lunch and to return at 13:30 for the self-evaluation exercise and the SMT will be invited to join at 14:15.

The next meeting of the Oversight Board is on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 0930.