

Redress Scotland

Guidance for observing sitting panels

1. Background

Redress Scotland is committed to continuously improving the quality of decision making processes and supporting the development of employees, board members and panel members. Observing sitting panels supports review and evaluation of decision making processes and contributes to individuals' development and appraisal.

2. The role of the observer

The role of the observer is to attend sitting panels to independently and objectively observe the work of the panel and the processes in making decisions. The observation experience and notes will be used for purposes of contributing to: the continuous improvement of Redress Scotland processes; ongoing quality assurance and improvement work; and evaluation and appraisal of panel members. Allocated observers will have completed the required training for panel members or have equivalent experience, knowledge and skills. Therefore, observers will usually be a board member, a panel member, a senior employee of Redress Scotland, or an employee with a specified remit for quality assurance and improvement. The Chair of Redress Scotland may attend any sitting panel.

3. Preparing for observing sitting panels

Observers will generally be allocated in advance of a sitting panel, to ensure that all panel members are aware of who will be in attendance. Any changes to the planned observer should also be shared with the sitting panel as soon as practically possible. The observer should prepare for the panel by reviewing the applications being considered, the notes prepared by panel members and the agenda set by the Chair of the sitting panel. As part of the preparation for observing sitting panels, the observer should consider whether there are any actual or potential conflicts of interest, and if any are identified these should be formally recorded and declared to the chair. A decision will then be made with the chair on whether the observer should be recused from attending all or part of the sitting panel.

4. Attending a sitting panel as an observer

The observer is not a member of the sitting panel and must not participate in, or influence the decision making of the sitting panel. However, if the observer becomes aware of an issue of concern, they may make a request to the allocated chair of the panel for a pause in the sitting panel in order that they can raise this concern. This should only occur in exceptional circumstances. Any such request should be recorded in the record of the sitting panel and in the Observer notes on sitting panel (Appendix One).

During the panel the observer should take notes on the panel in line with the purposes of observation. These notes must be compliant with the policies and procedures of Redress Scotland, particularly confidentiality and data protection. This means that the observer notes should not include any identifying details of applicants or their personal circumstances.

The observer should ensure that all of the documentation for the sitting panel that they review as preparation is destroyed as soon as practically possible after the panel. This must be confirmed with the administrator of the sitting panel they attended.

5. After observing a sitting panel

The observer must complete the Redress Scotland template *Observer notes on sitting panel* (Appendix One) and submit this to the allocated administrator for the panel within three days of the sitting panel concluding. This will be the formal record of the observation of the sitting panel. The allocated administrator will then store the completed record as outlined in the guidance for administrators.

The allocated administrator will ensure that the record of the sitting panel includes the information that an observer was in attendance, whether any conflicts of interest were identified and what (if any) action was taken in relation to conflicts of interest.

The information contained within the *Observer notes on sitting panel* will be reviewed and analysed by the Redress Scotland team. This will then be used for the purposes outlined. Any information on the evaluation and appraisal of panel members will use the competencies identified for panel members (Appendix Two), be constructive and inform the appraisal process for panel members.

Appendix one: Observer notes on sitting panel template
Redress Scotland: Observer notes on sitting panel
1. Basic information on sitting panel

<i>Sitting panel date:</i>	
<i>Summary of agenda for sitting panel:</i>	
<i>Observer name:</i>	
<i>Observer role:</i>	

2. Punctuality and attendance

If someone is late, or does not attend any part of the scheduled sitting day, please provide the name of the individual, times and reasons given in the box below.

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List of panel members and administrator present

<i>List of panel members and administrator present</i>	
Name: Role: Chair	
Name: Role:	
Name: Role:	
Name: Role:	

1. General observations on the sitting day

2. Effectiveness of Redress Scotland processes on the sitting day

3. Observations of strengths and areas for improvement

4. Observations on the application of the statutory guidance including the assessment framework and Redress Scotland procedural rules

5. Any issues of concern raised by the observer with the chair

6. Any other relevant observations

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7. Evaluation of chair, panel members and administrator within stated competencies

Note: observation notes should make it clear where they are referring to the sitting panel as a whole, and when they are referring to individuals

Delivering evidence based decision making
Working effectively with others
Communication skills
Expertise in redress scheme and relevant fields
Resilience and self-awareness
Working as a decision making panel to make consensual decisions

Appendix two: competencies for panel members

Skills and competencies	What does this mean?
ESSENTIAL	
1. A track record of delivering evidence-based decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of reviewing, processing and analysing complex material; ability to extract key information to draw conclusions • Ability to demonstrate objectivity and maintain independence of thought, in formulating own judgement • Ability to recognise the validity and limitations of different and sometimes conflicting sources of information, in order to arrive at a balanced judgement • Confidence to identify and respond to information gaps, and draw on expert opinion when required
2. Working effectively with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of constructively participating in deliberations and facilitating consensus, in order to reach a decision • Ability to engage and work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds, with differing opinions, in a group setting • Ability to confront difficult issues openly and sensitively
3. Excellent communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to clearly, accurately and concisely articulate reasons for decisions made, using straightforward language • Ability to ask probing, focused questions and challenge positions in a sensitive but objective manner • Ability to demonstrate emotional intelligence and tailor communication style appropriately
4. Expertise working in emotional and psychological trauma, law, social work, health or other relevant fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of delivering value-based outputs • Experience of working with vulnerable groups in the context of complex casework, assessment or service provision • Understanding of how to deliver a trauma-informed practice and service provision
DESIRABLE	
5. Resilience and self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of displaying resilience in having to consider difficult or distressing information to form a conclusion • Ability to cope with reading or hearing personal accounts of traumatic experiences • Ability to be self-aware, recognising your own thinking processes and make unbiased judgements

6. Experience working on a decision-making panel, tribunal or committee setting

- Experience of working with others and making decisions through consensus, taking into consideration relevant policies or procedures.