



Redress Scotland: Chair's Circular Six: Prevention of errors in letters to survivors

To: All Redress Scotland Panel Members

From: Bill Matthews, Interim Chair of Redress Scotland

Re: Prevention of errors in letters to survivors

1. Background to this Chair's Circular

This Chair's Circular is aligned to my responsibilities as Interim Chair for issuing guidance notes in the exercise of your functions as panel members under paragraph G5 of the standing orders, as well as helping give general information to panel members. When relevant and appropriate, I will distribute such guidance notes in the form of these Chair's Circulars.

This Chair's Circular discusses errors in letters to survivors and the direct actions Redress Scotland is taking to prevent these.

2. Recent errors in letters to survivors

Towards the end of 2022, we became aware of four errors in letters to survivors. Johnny Gwynne, as Chair requested that Joanna McCreadie, Chief Executive, should lead a review of these errors with the aim of understanding what had happened and identifying potential improvements to processes and practice. Working with Gary Gallacher, Head of Operations, Joanna completed this review and presented a thorough report to the Oversight Board meeting in mid-December. The report included key recommendations which were approved by the Oversight Board and which I will outline in this Chair's Circular.

3. Introduction of standards for Redress Scotland

The executive team have been working on a quality assurance and improvement framework for Redress Scotland and a draft of this was presented to the Oversight Board this week. The framework was approved by the Oversight Board and it will, in due course, include standards for practice. However, in advance of a complete list of standards for practice I am introducing a corporate standard for letters to survivors. This is set out below.

All letters to survivors are an important part of living our values of dignity, respect and compassion. Every letter must:

- **show evidence of our values;**
- **communicate clearly, directly and usefully; and**
- **be factually accurate.**

Panel members have a responsibility for ensuring that letters to survivors correctly reflect their statement of abuse and the content of their completed application as well as following internal guidance on communications.

The executive team will also be leading new work on the management and completion of panel member template notes. The aim of this is to provide improved guidance to panel members and set standards for completion of the notes. Further discussions will take place with the Practice Development group and the wider cohort of panel members to develop this area of work before it is concluded.

4. Change to guidance on processes for panel members

Panel members involved in the review process identified a number of ways to prevent errors with strong consensus on introducing a 'fact check' as part of the process of a sitting panel. A 'fact check' for letters will now be added for every letter and the Chair of the sitting panel will allocate this quality assurance task to one of the panel members.

5. Keeping individual survivors in mind

We know from the feedback that survivors have given that they deeply value the letter from panel members who have read their statement of abuse and reached a decision about redress in relation to their individual experience. It takes survivors considerable courage and trust to make an application for redress. Any error in a letter to an individual survivor disrupts the trust they have placed in Redress Scotland and creates the risk that they will not feel treated with dignity, respect and compassion.

As Interim Chair of Redress Scotland, above all else, I believe we should strive to do as well as we possibly can for every individual survivor. I would therefore strongly urge you to always keep the individual survivor in mind and the way in which your work will impact on them. This will help ensure that we fully prioritise the quality of our work, prevent errors, and keep survivors at the centre of what we do. Over the next year we plan to increase engagement with survivors, listen to their feedback and make improvements from what they tell us.

6. Conclusion

Through making some straightforward changes to our processes and practice, I believe that Redress Scotland panel members can continue to deliver robust decision-making and improve further by working to prevent errors. I anticipate that you will fully support the changes and value your continuing contribution to our shared endeavour.

Bill Matthews
Interim Chair of Redress Scotland