

Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Audit Risk and Assurance Committee

Date: 3rd September 2025 0930-1400

Minuted by: Diane Piper (DP), Governance Secretary, Redress Scotland

Committee Members

- Bill Matthews(WM) Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee Chair, Redress Scotland Deputy Chair
- Catherine Dyer(CD) Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee Member, Non- Executive Member of Redress Scotland
- Neil Mackay(NM) Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee Member, Non- Executive Member of Redress Scotland
- Colin Spivey(CS) Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee Member, Non – Executive Member of Redress Scotland

Participants

- Joanna McCreadie(JM) Redress Scotland Chief Executive
- Michael Stevens(MS) Redress Scotland Head of Finance and Resources
- Gary Gallacher (GG) Redress Scotland Head of Operations
- Michelle Nairn (MN) Redress Scotland Head of People
- Mel Lowe (ML) Redress Scotland Head of Policy and Improvement

By Invitation

- Martin Ritchie (MR) TIAA
- Gillian McCreadie(GM) Audit Scotland

In Attendance

- Kirsty Darwent (KD) Chair, Redress Scotland

Apologies

- Jane Gordon (JG) Redress Scotland Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee member, Panel Member

Agenda item 1. Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

1.1 Welcome

WM opened the meeting and welcomed all present. Although this is the final meeting for 2025 the Committee may need to meet again to review the annual report and accounts before their formal presentation to the Oversight Board.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies from JG were noted. WM noted that JG has now completed her term of appointment, and this would have been her last meeting. JG has communicated her thanks to all staff and members for supporting her in this governance role. WM added that he and KD will meet to discuss future membership of the committee and board.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

1.4 Appoint survivor voice;

CD was appointed as the meeting reviewer from the perspective of the survivor.

Agenda Item 2 Minutes of the previous meeting 24th June 2025

The minute from the meeting on the 24th June 2025 were approved as a true reflection of the discussions.

Agenda Item 3 Matters arising from the previous meeting

The action log was presented for approval. There were no outstanding actions.

Agenda item 4 Governance

4.1 Draft Oversight Board Meeting of 23rd July 2025

These were noted by members.

Agenda Item 5 Report from the Chair

WM updated the Committee with details of his activity since the last meeting.

WM continues to meet regularly with KD and JM when there are always a number of issues to discuss. WM also meets regularly on his own with KD. These meetings are noted but not minuted.

In terms of activity WM continues to observe panels. This is a very useful practice to keep connected to our frontline work. WM noted that it has been encouraging to see the new panel members integrate into panels. This is as a result of careful appointment, and thorough training.

One area of concern is the increase in the number of applications from survivors with previous convictions. Members requested the dashboard be amended to show a breakdown of the numbers of applicants with previous convictions. More quantitative data in this area would be useful. It was further noted that these cases can be more complex and therefore need additional resources and time to complete. GG offered to prepare the paper on the number of these cases and the potential impact any increase in volume could have on monthly forecasting.

Action; Dashboard to be amended to show a breakdown of the numbers of applications received from applicants with previous convictions. AW

Action; JM and GG to prepare a paper on the impact on the forecast of 120 to 140 applications per month if there is a steady rise in applications from survivors with previous convictions.

Agenda Item 6 CEO Reports

CEO Report and dashboard.

JM updated members with her activity since the last meeting;

- JM was able to confirm that the combined submission from the redress division and us has been sent to the Deputy First Minister. The request is for additional resources across the whole of the scheme i.e. case workers for the redress division and increased panel members and staff for Redress Scotland. In recent times there has developed a greater understanding that the two operations are intrinsically linked and need to expand together. This is now a cabinet level and government wide decision. Members acknowledged the constraints and challenges for public sector spending. A decision is expected by the end of September.
- We continue to deliver 120 to 130 decisions per month as was forecast, while remaining within budget. This helps to accurately map out future delivery.
- A number of themes are developing in operations particularly around the complexity of applications reflecting the different number of care place settings applicants have been in. There are also a larger number of applicants with previous convictions. This runs against the work currently underway on efficiency. The role of our legal advisers is also increasing as we are sending more challenging questions for them to advise on.

- The quality of legal advice provided by legal firms to applicants can vary considerably. This has been shared in discussion with Scottish Government. Further engagement is planned with solicitors.
- There is continued pressure in the operations team. Recruitment for a second operations manager is underway. The People team are also under pressure due to absence. Of the nine new panel members that completed training one has resigned. The remaining eight are all settling in well and appreciate the support and welcome they have received.
- The potential pay award increase may impact the number of panels in the last quarter of the year. We will also be subject to new charges for the Oracle system.
- The efficiencies and effectiveness group are working on efficiencies for two person panels. Also under consideration is the different approach by panel members in undertaking pre-panel preparation work.
- The business continuity plan and accompanying action plan was approved at SMT and will go forward to the Oversight Board in October.

Committee members raised the following areas for further discussion;

1. The purchase of a CMS. Initial estimates are in the region of £300K but it could be much greater than this. As this is an initial assessment of costs. Discussions continue with the sponsor team who advised that there are no additional funds available. We will wait to hear the outcome of the proposal to the Deputy First Minister and then raise this again. Implementation costs and ongoing maintenance costs will also have to be considered.
2. Although the number of material errors is low there is a recognition any one material error could impact significantly on our reputation and the scheme. The proposal is to update the risk register to the Oversight Board, and a copy of the risk register will be circulated to ARAC members and included on the agenda for the February ARAC meeting.
3. Members noted that following union balloting for industrial action 90% of members agreed to reject the recent pay offer with 80% in favour of and of industrial action. This should be included in the business continuity plan as strike action has the potential to affect operations
4. Concern was noted on quality of work completed by solicitors on behalf of applicants and the committee supported further work on this.
5. There was a suggestion to include at the start and end of each panel meeting a statement in relation to unconscious bias, linked to the values of the scheme. This will be considered and drafted.

Action; The business continuity action plan and risk register to be updated to include risk on material errors and potential for industrial action and shared with ARAC members when circulated to the Oversight Board.

Action; Consideration to be given to the redrafting of the opening statement at each panel meeting to highlight unconscious bias

Agenda item 7 Strategic Risk Register

7.1 Deep Dive into People and Resources

MN presented this item confirming that this risk was updated in April to include resources. The paper outlines the risk, the associated mitigations, and the impact of loss of people. The committee were invited to provide feedback on the content and approach to this risk.

WM noted that the enthusiasm of being a new public body has now shifted to business as usual with the challenge now of how we can sustain the positive culture over time.

MN responded by highlighting the work around the well-being framework which forms the foundation of the people work. Regular staff and panel members surveys with action plans keep our focus alive and relevant.

ML added that 10 to 15 key controls across the organisation are currently being developed, and these will be brought to the Oversight Board and ARAC later in the year.

The absence management policy did not appear to be included, and MN will add this in.

A number of wellbeing supports have been purchased, e.g. Optima and Sleep Station and a half yearly report to the Oversight Board on health and safety will include an evaluation of these services.

Members thanked MN for an excellent report with one question around the closure of the scheme and the impact on staff morale, retention, and timing around when the board should start considering the plan for this. It was acknowledged that there is a fine balance of timing speaking to trade unions no redundancy clause there will be a process of cross skilling and succession planning. In addition, coaching and mentoring will be revived towards the end of this year. GG added that there will have two years following notification of closure to complete any outstanding applications so there should be sufficient time to consider planning for this.

WM and JM will consider the next risk to be addressed at the February meeting.

Action; MN to add the Absence Management Policy to the paper.

Action; WM/JM to identify next area of risk to be reviewed.

Agenda Item 8 Audit Updates

Internal Audit Reports – presented by MR

8.1 Communication and engagement

MR reported a positive outcome to the audit of payroll and expenses which provided substantial assurance. There are no recommendations and MR confirmed that the previous recommendations have been addressed.

8.2 Audit Plan 2025/2026

To plan for the second half of the year MR met Joanna and Mike and agreed the work as outlined in Appendix E. The plan is to revisit business continuity and disaster recovery, budget control with financial responsibility and cybersecurity. There will also be a focus on operational systems.

WM noted that a lot of work has been loaded into the last two quarters of the year.

NM thought there was great areas of focus and aligns with our discussions that when cyber is complete we will have clear lineations of our responsibility and Scottish Government and document the relevant assurances.

The internal audit plan was agreed by the committee.

8.3 Internal Audit Annual Report-2024/25

MR reported this is a standard report to conclude the work undertaken in 2024/2025 the report highlights the areas covered and the assurance levels provided. The report also includes a statement confirming their independence and that all work was undertaken within the budget. WM thanked MR for his report and for confirming everything was covered.

External Audit Presented by GM

GM advised that in line with the audit schedule work would start next week. The expectation is that there will be 3 weeks for field work and then they will be presented to ARAC for approval before signature by the Oversight Board.

Agenda Item 9 Papers for Information

9.1 Management accounts P4 July

MS presented the July accounts to the committee noting an overspend in July and an underspend in August. These have still to be presented to the senior management team, but the prediction is for a net overspend of £1.5k. This year we received 50% of the increase in National Insurance costs and we are expecting 60% of these costs next year.

The variance against budget is 0.08%.

There followed discussion on how training costs of new panel members impact the cost per decision when induction training of panel members is undertaken. It was agreed to include a short note to the figures to explain the increase.

Action: MS to add a note to the section on cost per decision explaining the jump in people and salaries when a new cohort are undertaking induction training.

Agenda Item 10 Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee forward plan

Two items to add to the forward plan, an in-person meeting in February and the assurance map and checklist of assurances to be reviewed at that meeting.

Agenda item 11 AOB

None

Agenda item 12 Review of Meeting Survivor Voice

CD reminded board members that the purpose of the feedback is to provide comfort for survivors.

Key observations were that checkpoints for quality assurance are working and continue to be improved. Observers of panels include KD, WM and JM which provides a good level of scrutiny of panel activity. New panel members are also being observed to ensure that they feel supported in their role and to provide assurance to the organisation of the continued quality of decision making. There was focus on the material error policy and there was an acknowledgement of the challenges around applications from survivors with criminal convictions.

WM thanked CD for her summary adding that survivors would appreciate these reflections at the end of the meeting.

WM thanked everyone for their contribution.

The meeting ended at 1150.