

BUSINESS PLAN



2024-25

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Foreword

Eric McQueen
Chief Executive

It is my privilege to introduce the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) annual business plan. This plan sets out our key business outcomes and the environment in which SCTS will operate in 2024-25.

Over the coming year, our work will be driven by our four key reform areas: criminal justice; civil justice; tribunals and OPG and improving the corporate organisation. Across the justice sector everyone is having to deal with a challenging economic and fiscal outlook – requiring us to innovate and provide services in the most efficient way. This business plan details how we will continue to focus on supporting our people, while we embed new ways of working and continue to develop a more sustainable business model, enabling us to support justice now and in the future.



The criminal court recovery programme will continue during 2024-25. Good progress has been made to date. Since the introduction of the recovery programme, scheduled trials have reduced by over 16,000, from a peak of above 43,000 in January 2022 to just over 27,000 at the end of January 2024. We anticipate that summary criminal court scheduled trials will recover during 2024-25, slightly later than previously projected, due to higher than expected levels of case registrations. Solemn business is more challenging as the level of cases entering the system continues to grow – a trend that was apparent before the pandemic and shows no sign of abating. A continued increase in court capacity will be required in the longer-term to address this continued growth.

There is widespread acknowledgement across the justice sector that the way in which complainers and witnesses experience the justice system can sometimes exacerbate the impact of prior trauma. A key goal for SCTS is to enhance the services we provide by becoming a trauma informed organisation. Over the coming year we will work in collaboration with the Victims Taskforce and NHS Education for Scotland to implement the Knowledge and Skills Framework for Trauma Informed Justice across the organisation, delivering training according to needs and developing processes to address the risk to our staff of vicarious trauma.

SCTS has secured funding to create two new evidence by commission suites and two new, trauma informed, vulnerable witness live link rooms, providing further support to the vulnerable when giving evidence. The creation of these suites supports a key recommendation in the Lord Justice Clerk's review of sexual offences and is an example of taking a trauma informed approach to future service design.

Within civil business, we will continue to enhance our Integrated Case Management System so that it can support all civil business. This will include providing users with the ability to raise ordinary actions via Civil Online in the Sheriff Courts, increasing by approximately 30% the number of cases that can be submitted electronically.

In the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) we will launch the first phase a new case management system, enabling faster processing of Power of Attorney applications. This will help in managing the backlog of current applications and the increase in business volumes OPG has experienced over recent years, a trend we expect to continue .

Tribunals expansion will continue during 2024-25. New jurisdictions such as police appeals and transport related functions, low emission zones and workplace parking licensing, will form part of the work of Scotland's Tribunals. We also expect the work of the Social Security Chamber to increase significantly. In managing the expansion of business, we will continue to make best use of digital initiatives, enabling fully virtual or hybrid hearings where appropriate.

I commend the outcomes set out in this plan – and the staff of SCTS who will make them a reality, keeping us focused on our purpose - supporting justice.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Who we are

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) is a non-ministerial office established by the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008. Its statutory function is to provide administrative support to Scotland's courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). SCTS has a presence in many of Scotland's communities where court and tribunal business is conducted daily. In total, the estate comprises 71 buildings made up of courts, vulnerable witness suites, tribunals and offices. We operate from 51 distinct locations across Scotland's six sheriffdoms, together with 13 remote video witness sites. Tribunals also make use of some 70 further venues across Scotland for hearings.

In addition to administering Scotland's courts and tribunals, SCTS supports the OPG and Accountant of Court (AOC). The OPG provides guidance and undertakes investigations to protect vulnerable people under the terms of the Adults with Incapacity Act 2000. The Public Guardian is also the Accountant of Court.

SCTS also provides the staff and administrative support to the:

- Scottish Civil Justice Council - which drafts rules of procedure for the civil courts, and advises the Lord President on the development of the civil justice system; and
- Scottish Sentencing Council - which is responsible for preparing sentencing guidelines, and for publishing guideline judgments and information about sentences imposed by the courts in Scotland.

The purpose of SCTS is **supporting justice**. We fulfil that purpose by providing the people, buildings and services needed to support the judiciary, courts, devolved tribunals and the OPG. This Business Plan covers the 2024-25 financial year. It aligns with our [Corporate Plan 2023-26](#) which sets out our strategic priorities and objectives for that three year period. For each year of the corporate plan, SCTS prepares a business plan. This plan explains the environment within which SCTS will be operating for the year ahead and sets the outcomes we aim to deliver across our four key reform areas: Criminal, Civil, Tribunals/OPG and Corporate. We report on performance against key performance indicators in our [Board Scorecard](#). We also prepare and publish an [Annual Report and Accounts](#), a Business Plan Delivery Report and a range of official statistics on our work.

The services we deliver provide access to justice. We put users at the centre of design and delivery, aspiring to meet their changing needs and expectations - using technology to improve the service we offer. To help us achieve the outcomes in this plan, each business unit within SCTS produces its own annual plan, setting out more detailed priorities and activities on which they will focus. All our work is underpinned by our core values of **respect, service and excellence**:

Our values and behaviours

RESPECT

- Be courteous
- Be open and fair
- Work as one team

SERVICE

- Deliver a professional service
- Learn in all we do
- Set an example

EXCELLENCE

- Innovate
- Collaborate
- Be accountable

Our operating environment

Our strategy

Our strategy map illustrates our purpose, values and strategic priorities. It also illustrates how these priorities support the wider outcomes set in Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#).

SCTS Strategy Map



In order to deliver successfully on these priorities the way in which we approach our business is critical. Whilst independent, we work collaboratively with the Scottish Government, the Justice Board for Scotland, and a broad range of justice agencies. The [Vision for Justice in Scotland](#), published in 2022, provides a common focus for all involved in the delivery of criminal and civil justice. Our work supports the delivery of its outcomes and goals (which are summarised at [Annex A](#)).

Our operating environment

Our work in context - summary of achievements

Scotland's courts, tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian continued to experience significant growth and development over the past year. During 2023-24, we remained committed to the effective prioritisation of resources – ensuring that we continue to deliver on the vision in our [Corporate Plan 2023-26](#) and our purpose of 'supporting justice'. Some key changes and service improvements achieved so far are summarised below:

- **Court Recovery Programme** – continuing to address rising levels of indictments and resolving the backlogs that emerged during the pandemic by increasing the level of criminal case throughput (the number of scheduled trials peaked at 43,606 in January 2022. With the introduction of the recovery programme, this has reduced by 16,344. As at the end of January 2024 there were just over 27,000 scheduled trials).
- **Investing in Wellbeing** – during 2023 an innovative Wellbeing Hour Pilot, new National Wellbeing and Carers Groups to promote workforce wellbeing, and Mental Health Awareness and First Aid training were rolled-out.
- **Expanding Evidence by Commission Suites** – we now have bespoke facilities in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Inverness and Edinburgh, accommodating an increasing number of commissions, supporting the most vulnerable witnesses to pre-record their evidence in advance of trial (approximately 700 commission were held in 2023-24).
- **Improving Case Management Systems (CMS)** – launching a new Social Security Chamber (SSC) CMS, with appeals now processed online. In addition, a new Civil Online portal for caveats was launched enabling users to submit, track and renew their caveats electronically.
- **Summary Case Management (SCM) Improvements** – an Interim Evaluation of pilots at Dundee, Hamilton and Paisley Sheriff Courts reported at least 250 summary trials did not require to be assigned, directly as a result of early resolution due to SCM. There was also a reduction in the first citation of civilian witnesses and police witnesses of 25% and 34% respectively in domestic abuse cases. The pilot has now been extended to other areas, starting with Domestic Abuse Cases in Glasgow Sheriff Court.
- **Office of the Public Guardian** – completing work to scope then commence the development (phase 1 Power of Attorney) of a new CMS - to deliver a responsive, user-centred service that is efficient and easily accessible.
- **New Centralised Recruitment, Resourcing and Reward Unit** – centrally managing, all recruitment campaigns, to simplify the hiring experience for both candidates and recruiters alike and ensuring that we continue to attract top talent to SCTS.
- **MyCareer** – introducing our new performance management system, with regular coaching check-ins as a key feature: supporting contribution and performance, appraisal and probation.
- **Sustainability** – continued investment in the built estate to reduce carbon output with: LED light upgrades at Peterhead Sheriff Court; investing in electric vehicles/charging infrastructure; further solar panels installed at the Inverness Justice Centre; and window upgrades, additional solar panels and LED light upgrades at Edinburgh Sheriff Court.
- **IQ Vision Platform** – successfully installed in 46 SCTS buildings improving our ability to monitor and control heating and/ ventilation remotely. Enhancements include wireless sensors that improve comfort levels while reducing energy wastage.
- **Equality** – demonstrating our commitment with the publication of our Mainstreaming Equality Report and a new set of Equality Outcomes for 2023-27; and winning the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei) Silver Award in this year's Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) benchmarking exercise.
- **Investing in Leaders** – completing the first year of the new SCTS talent programme, known as Thrive, which culminated in November 2023 with 15 members of staff graduating from the programme.

Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas

Scotland's courts and tribunals provide the forum in which citizens can assert their rights. The reforms the SCTS has undertaken and is embarking on, in collaboration with others in the justice and third sector, help to shape and improve the performance of the system.

The justice system in Scotland continually develops in response to wider changes in society – including the financial climate, demographic changes and climate change threats. The Scottish Government's wider Vision for Justice is [here](#).

Our high-level priorities are set out in the [Corporate Plan 2023-26](#). We also have key corporate strategies covering people, estates and digital development, setting our priorities in these core supporting areas. Some of the key policy and legislative developments shaping our work in 2024-25 are outlined below.

Improving the management of sexual offence cases

SCTS now has bespoke facilities in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Inverness and Edinburgh, accommodating an increasing number of commissions, supporting the most vulnerable witnesses to pre-record their evidence in advance of trial (approximately 700 commissions were conducted in 2023-24).

SCTS has secured funding to create three new evidence by commission suites in 2024-25. The first suite will be located in a new state of the art facility in Dundee. This will also include two new, trauma informed, vulnerable witness live link rooms, providing further support to the vulnerable when giving evidence. The location of the two further suites will be announced following consultation and development.

The creation of these new suites supports a key recommendation from the Lord Justice Clerk's review of sexual offences – that a national sexual offences court should be created and a core feature of cases heard in that court should be the pre-recording of the evidence of all complainers. Development of these facilities is an example of taking a trauma informed approach to future service design.

Many of the recommendations from the Lord Justice Clerk's review require new legislation. We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government during the passage of the [Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#) to ensure SCTS has measures in place to support new legislation once enacted.



Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas



Summary case management

The Summary Case Management (SCM) Pilot, introduced at Dundee, Hamilton and Paisley Sheriff Courts, seeks to reduce the number of unnecessary hearings by facilitating early disclosure of evidence, early engagement between the Crown and defence and early judicial case management. These measures reduce the number of cases set down for trial unnecessarily, the volume of late pleas of guilty and late decisions to discontinue proceedings.

An interim report on the pilot was [published](#) in November 2023. Key achievements included: at least 250 summary trials that were concluded at an early stage; a 25% reduction in the first citation of civilian witnesses; and a 34% reduction in the first citation of police witnesses in domestic abuse cases. Following this success the model was expanded further to cover domestic abuse cases in Glasgow Sheriff Court from January 2024. The initial results evidence that the Pilot could improve the efficiency of summary criminal courts to the benefit of all involved. The final evaluation report is due to be published in the summer of 2024, which will also take account of the expansion of the pilot into Glasgow. Subject to its findings, further work will be taken forward to expand the approach.

Criminal court recovery programme

In response to the impact of the pandemic on outstanding criminal case levels and the continued trend of increasing solemn case registrations, the criminal court recovery programme commenced in September 2021. An additional 4 trial courts were allocated to the High Court, 2 for Sheriff Solemn business and 10 for Sheriff Summary business. In April 2023, recovery resources were switched from summary to solemn business. A further 2 trial courts were introduced in the High Court and 6 for Sheriff Solemn business, with the simultaneous reduction of 10 trial courts in Sheriff Summary.

The additional trial courts, combined with excellent levels of collaboration across justice organisations, the legal profession and the 3rd sector, have increased trial capacity and case conclusions to above pre-COVID levels. The number of scheduled trials peaked at 43,606 in January 2022. Since then, with the introduction of the recovery programme, this has reduced by over 16,000 to just over 27,000, as at the end of November 2023. The aim of the criminal court recovery programme is to reach a position where the number of scheduled trials across all criminal business types is around 20,000, which represents a manageable level of cases in the system.

Updated modelling was [published](#) in December 2023. This indicates that summary criminal court scheduled trials are projected to reach a revised baseline during 2024-25, slightly later than previous modelling had indicated, due to higher than expected levels of case registrations. Solemn business is more challenging as the level of cases entering the system continues to grow – a trend that was apparent before the pandemic and shows no sign of abating. A continued increase in court capacity will be required in the longer-term to address this continued growth. The switching of recovery programme resources from summary to solemn since April 2023 has had a positive impact. Our modelling indicates that, provided these resources are sustained, it will be possible to reach a stable – albeit higher – level of outstanding High Court cases during 2025, with Sheriff Solemn case levels stabilising during 2026-27.

Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas

Trauma Informed Domestic Abuse Model

Work to deliver our ambition to become a trauma informed organisation is shaped by a series of workshops and stakeholder engagement sessions. The roll-out of the first virtual trial court in Aberdeen is now anticipated during the summer of 2024, with plans to roll-out across the sheriffdom of Grampian, Highland and Islands thereafter. The approach will enable focussed use of community justice resources, with benefits for both complainers and the accused (particularly those subject to stringent bail conditions).

The model proposes the use of increased judicial case management by designated specially trained sheriffs, specialist prosecutors, and support for solicitors to undertake trauma informed training. Importantly, evidence from the police and medical professionals will also be given remotely. This enables them to continue with their essential duties as opposed to travelling to, and waiting in, court and the costs associated with that. It also aims to enable support services to be effectively focused, for the development of bespoke community remedies such as the [Caledonian Programme](#), and a problem solving approach to bail, remand and sentencing.

Virtual custodies

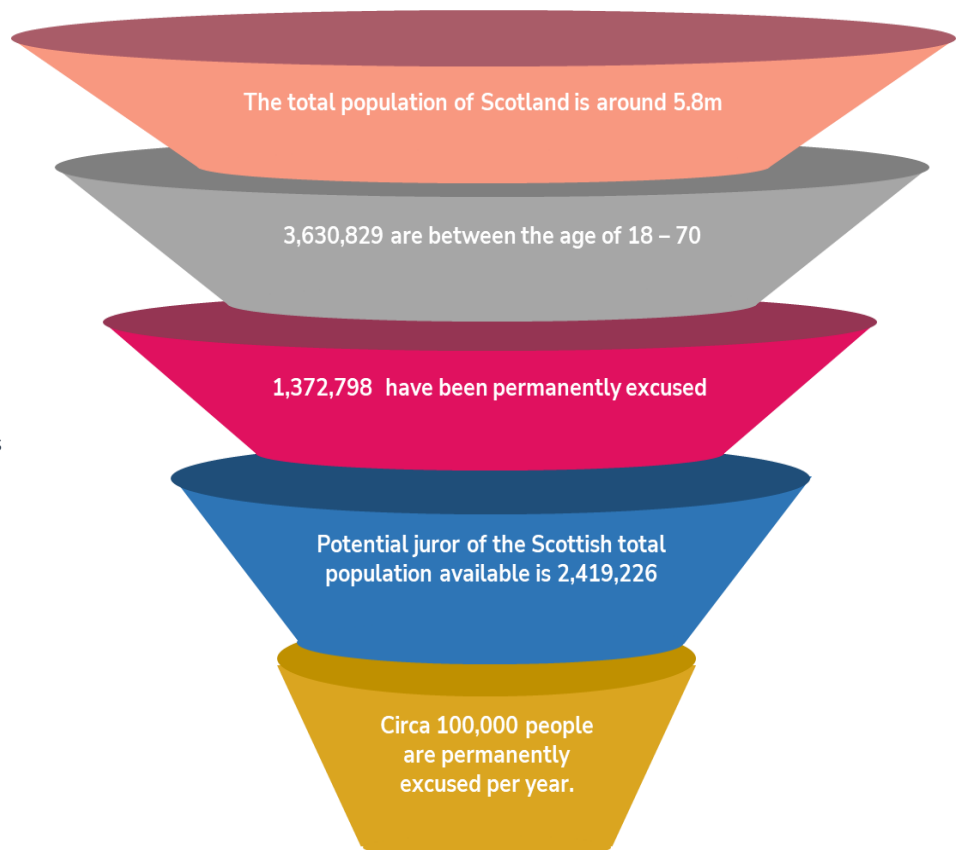
SCTS remains committed to the development of a national Virtual Custody (VC) model. The project, directed by a Strategic Steering Group, aims to create a dedicated VC court system across Scotland. The approach has the potential to deliver real benefits for the needs of the accused, minimising transportation to / physical appearance in courts; and providing a more supportive environment with dedicated services at police custody units. The end-goal is to develop a fully virtual custody court with all participants appearing remotely, whilst accused remain in custody units.

Modernising the Jury Process

Jurors make up the largest group of customers that SCTS has, with over 700,000 members of the public receiving a jury citation in 2022. Without jurors' attendance, solemn criminal business could not proceed.

A new project, which commenced in the autumn of 2023, aims to develop a more efficient process that better meets the needs of both jurors and SCTS operational staff. Work is being undertaken to understand the impact on citizens and organisations that higher jury citation levels may have, driven by the continuing growth in the level of solemn cases entering the courts. As we develop this service, new solutions will be explored including the potential for an automated digital jury portal and a centralised jury support function to engage with jurors and manage citations.

Did you know that?



Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas

Criminal justice - legislative agenda in 2024-25

The **Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Act 2022** continued provisions which have enabled SCTS to continue to innovate in how business is conducted. A consultation is underway to consider the permanency of the criminal provisions which, if passed, will allow continued innovation in these areas - such as the management of hearings by virtual means.

The **Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2019 ("the 2019 Act")** came into force on 20 January 2020 — introducing a presumption that child witnesses in the most serious criminal cases (in the High Court initially) should have their evidence pre-recorded, to minimise the potential trauma of court appearances. SCTS has secured funding to create two new evidence by commission suites (there is already four suites in operation across the country) and two new, trauma informed, vulnerable witness live link rooms, providing further support to the vulnerable when giving evidence. The creation of these suites supports a key recommendation in the Lord Justice Clerk's review of sexual offences and is an example of taking a trauma informed approach to future service design.

Improving the management of sexual offence cases - a review, led by the Lord Justice Clerk (Lady Dorrian), published its final report on 18 March 2021 and made a number of recommendations, including: the presumption of the pre-recording of evidence; the creation of a specialist sexual offences court; improving the experiences of complainers; taking steps to enhance juries' involvement; considering a time limited pilot of rape cases being presided over by a single judge with no jury; and adopting, as far as possible, elements of the Children's Hearing system.

The **Victims, Witness and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill** is taking forward a number of these proposals and is currently at Stage 1 in the Scottish Parliament. This Bill includes a number of significant provisions, including a requirement to have regard to trauma informed practice, the establishment of a Sexual Offences court, the abolition of the "not Proven" verdict, the reduction of the jury size from 15-12, a right to independent legal representation for complainers in certain sexual offence cases and the ability to pilot rape trials before a judge without a jury. We will continue to monitor this Bill closely as it progresses through the Scottish Parliament. Work on the non-statutory recommendations of the review continues, with a programme of trauma informed training rolling out across all SCTS staff over the course of 2024.

The **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021** aims to modernise existing laws that protect certain groups from hate crime; pulling them into a single Act and building on the current groups specifically protected. We will continue to work with the Scottish Government and justice partners to ensure that the Act is implemented effectively.

Bail and Release from Custody (Scotland) Act 2023 - this act makes numerous changes to provisions relating to bail, including requiring the court to record further information on bail decisions, repealing Section 23D of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 and reducing the circumstances in which bail can be refused. There are provisions which allow for further input from community justice social work prior to decisions on bail. It also allows time spent on electronically monitored bail in certain qualifying conditions to be taken into account when a custodial sentence is passed. The Act also includes changes to the arrangement for the release of prisoners. Again we will work with justice partners and Scottish Government to ensure effective implementation.

Civil justice reform

Key reform areas

Digital case management

Our civil Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) continues to develop. Full digital case management and processing can take place in simple procedure cases and an increasingly broad range of business can now be conducted online.

In the course of 2024-25 we will provide users with the ability to raise ordinary actions within the Sheriff Courts via Civil Online and track the progress of cases online. This will significantly increase the percentage of cases that can be submitted electronically (ordinary actions account for approximately 30% of all civil business in our Sheriff Courts). In the Court of Session, ICMS will be further developed to provide solicitors with access to their cases electronically, giving them the ability to track cases and submit non-initiating case documents.

Meeting the needs of our users

As we continue to make progress towards a fully end-to-end digital system for civil business, a range of benefits are being realised. These include reducing the number of queries/requests dealt with by court staff; providing consistency of process for solicitor firms who litigate in both the Court of Session and Sheriff Courts; providing quicker access to case information for solicitors and improved system and data security. These changes will expand both accessibility and access to the civil court system – helping us realise the ambition that the court is not simply viewed as a building, but as a service – accessible in a range of ways according to need.

As we continue to enhance ICMS, we ensure any new services are delivered in line with Digital Scotland Service Standards. A key element of meeting the service standards is providing a service that everyone can use. This includes those with disabilities, those who have no access to the internet and those who may lack the skills or confidence to use it. As part of our drive to ensure the services we provide are as accessible as possible, we now have in place a protected characteristics survey, which is included in all emails generated via Civil Online, as well as placed on strategic pages of the [SCTS website](#). Feedback received via the survey is assisting us to continuously enhance the service we provide.

Increasing transparency

In June 2023, the Court of Session became the first court in Scotland with a regular live streaming service. At present only certain cases in the Inner House (primarily the appeal court) can be streamed live. Allowing cases to be viewed remotely by the public improves access to justice and helps to inform and educate the public about the work of the judiciary and the court – allowing interested parties to view proceedings when they are unable to attend in person. In the first six months of its launch, livestream hearings have attracted over 88,500 users to the SCTS website and has had a global reach, with people viewing proceedings in Australia, New Zealand, USA and across Europe.

The live streaming of hearings in the Inner House of the Court of Session provides a solid foundation from which to explore further opportunities to promote open justice in Scotland's courts. Work is now progressing, in collaboration with others in the justice sector and broadcast media, to understand the key issues involved in extending digital access to criminal and civil hearings in Scotland and inform future development in this area.

Adapting our services as the law develops

Each year the Scottish Government publishes its Programme for Government. This details the legislation the Government will introduce in the coming year and beyond. It includes a legislative programme for the next parliamentary year to drive forward change and improvement. The Scottish Civil Justice Council (SCJC) prepares draft rules of procedure for the civil courts and advises the Lord President on the development of the civil justice system in Scotland.

SCTS supports the changes made by Government and the SCJC. We aim to keep our systems and processes up to speed with legislative change. We have a dedicated legislation and information team to ensure the SCTS understands and is able to respond to legislative changes, regulations and business practices impacting the courts – based around management information, analytical services and robust change management processes, as many changes can require quite significant planning and development to successfully deliver.

Civil justice reform

Key reform areas

Civil Justice - legislative agenda in 2024-25

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020, along with the **Scottish Government's Family Law Modernisation Strategy**, will make substantial changes to how family proceedings operate in Scotland's courts. The Act aims to ensure that: the views of the child are heard in contact and residence cases; provisions are in place to further protect victims of domestic abuse and their children; and the best interests of the child are at the centre of contact and residence cases and Children's Hearings. We will continue to work with the Scottish Government to ensure proposals can be implemented effectively.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill will incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law. The Bill provides that public authorities must not act in a way incompatible with the UNCRC and enables any person to bring proceedings against a public authority in a civil court or tribunal for acting, or proposing to act, in an incompatible manner. It also gives courts the power to strike down or declare as incompatible with the UNCRC requirements any legislation that cannot be interpreted consistently with the UNCRC. The Bill has now passed the reconsideration stage following the Supreme Court decision that parts of the original Bill fell outwith the competence of the Scottish Parliament. We will work with the Scottish Civil Justice Council (SCJC) in the development of necessary court rules and Scottish Government to ensure effective implementation.

The Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 introduces new domestic abuse protection notices and orders. It also creates a new ground on which a social landlord can apply for recovery of a house from a perpetrator of domestic abuse, with a view to transferring it to the victim or, where the perpetrator and victim are joint tenants, to end the perpetrator's interest in the tenancy and enable the victim to remain in the family home. The SCTS will continue to work with the Scottish Government and other justice partners to ensure the provisions, which have the potential to require a number of new court processes, can be implemented effectively. We expect some of these provisions to commence in 2024-25.

A number of changes in court rules are also currently under consideration by the SCJC. Work has commenced on Simple Special Claims Rules, the extension of Simplified Divorce/Dissolution (to include actions involving children of the marriage under the age of 16 with and no dispute about their welfare) and Rules Re-Write, which would create one set of rules for ordinary actions proceeding in the Court of Session and Sheriff Court. We will work with SCJC over the coming year to ensure that these and any other rule changes can be developed, and implemented effectively.



Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian reform

Key reform areas

Tribunals expansion

Under the leadership of the President of Scottish Tribunals and the Lord President, tribunals reform will continue during 2024-25. The First-tier Tribunal for Scotland will expand further with the subsequent expansion of the Upper Tribunal for Scotland, supporting the vision of providing judicially-led tribunals that are modern, efficient and user-focused. Ensuring that the judiciary, staff, systems and resources are in place to manage significant expansion and increasing case volumes remains a key priority.

The First-tier Tribunal for Scotland comprises the Housing and Property Chamber (HPC), Health and Education Chamber (HEC), Tax Chamber (TC), Social Security Chamber (SSC), Local Taxation Chamber (LTC) and General Regulatory Chamber (GRC). The transfer of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland (MHTS) into the Mental Health Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland has been further delayed and a prospective date of transfer is awaited from the Scottish Government.

The GRC will further expand in 2024-25 to include jurisdictions covering police appeals and transport-related functions such as Low Emission Zones (LEZs) and workplace parking and licencing. LEZ appeals will extend to cover Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. Bus Services appeals directly to the Upper Tribunal for Scotland will be introduced in December 2024. In-year, we expect changes to the rules of procedure for the Pensions Appeal Tribunal Scotland, which is anticipated will impact on application timescales; in turn shortening existing timeframes and affecting workload.

There is continued, sustained growth in volumes of applications in the MHTS and a steady increase within the HEC. Caseloads within the HPC continue to fluctuate and further housing reforms are expected following the close of the Cost of Living Act (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) on the 31 March 2024. Caseloads for the LTC remain uncertain and we will continue to monitor activity throughout the year.

As new welfare benefits are devolved to Scotland, we expect the work of the SSC to increase significantly this year as the Carer Support Payment, Pension Age Disability Payment and Pension Age Winter and Heating Payment appeals are introduced, and the volume of Adult Disability Payment appeals continues to increase. Proposals for the devolution of the administration of Reserved Tribunals to SCTS remain on hold, pending agreement of any transfer between the UK Government and the Scottish Government.

Hybrid hearings

Throughout 2023-24, in collaboration with tribunals' judiciary, we increased the number of in-person hearings where appropriate whilst embedding hybrid hearing models. This supports user preference and increases flexibility by accommodating both digital (video and teleconference) and in-person attendance. During 2024-25, we will continue developing the tribunals hearing strategy to make best use of digital initiatives, expanding in-person proceedings and the hybrid hearing model to ensure our service users and judiciary have access to the right hearing modality with sufficient flexibility to support accessible, efficient and effective outcomes. We will continue to improve and, where possible, unify methods for gathering and evaluating user feedback across the jurisdictions we support.

Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian reform

Key reform areas

Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) reform

Digital transformation

Transformation activity across the OPG aims to deliver a digital first, responsive, user-centred service that is efficient and easily accessible for users. This shift is being supported by development of a new modern case management system, which will improve efficiency, resilience and security.

The first stage will provide a platform for development of an online, secure, 24/7 Power of Attorney (POA) public register, on which members of the public can amend the details of existing POAs, lodge guardianship documents and accounts through a web portal; and through which information can be securely shared with those agencies who need to know about registered powers. This allows for SCTS to continuously improve the information it provides and the quality of service.

Legislative change

Following the review of the Mental Health & Incapacity Law in Scotland, which published its finding in September 2022, Scottish Government is expected to publish a delivery plan for the Mental Health & Capacity Reform Programme, in early 2024. This programme is expected to include proposals to reform the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. Any reform will have a significant impact on the work of the OPG.

Office of the Accountant of Court reform

A Bill to reform and modernise the law relating to judicial factors has been published and was introduced on 5 December 2023. The Bill will implement the Scottish Law Commission's recommendations to update the law around the appointment and supervision of judicial factors. It consolidates and updates the various Judicial Factors Acts, dating from 1859 to 1889, plus related legislation, and aims to put in place an updated and comprehensive regime in this area of the law. The Bill will have a direct impact on the work of the Office of the Accountant of Court.



Corporate reform

Key reform areas

Our people

As an organisation, SCTS encourages and supports the wellbeing, development and work-life balance of all those who work for us. As part of a two year pay deal agreed with the Public and Commercial and Services Union, SCTS will implement a 35-hour working week for its staff with effect from 1 October 2024. Many studies have shown that a reduction in the working week can bring real benefits, such as better employee retention and improved wellbeing with no negative impact on overall productivity. This builds on a range of initiatives we have in place to provide a healthy working environment and improve the quality of working lives for all our employees – supporting our core values of respect, service and excellence and the recognition that our employees are our greatest asset.

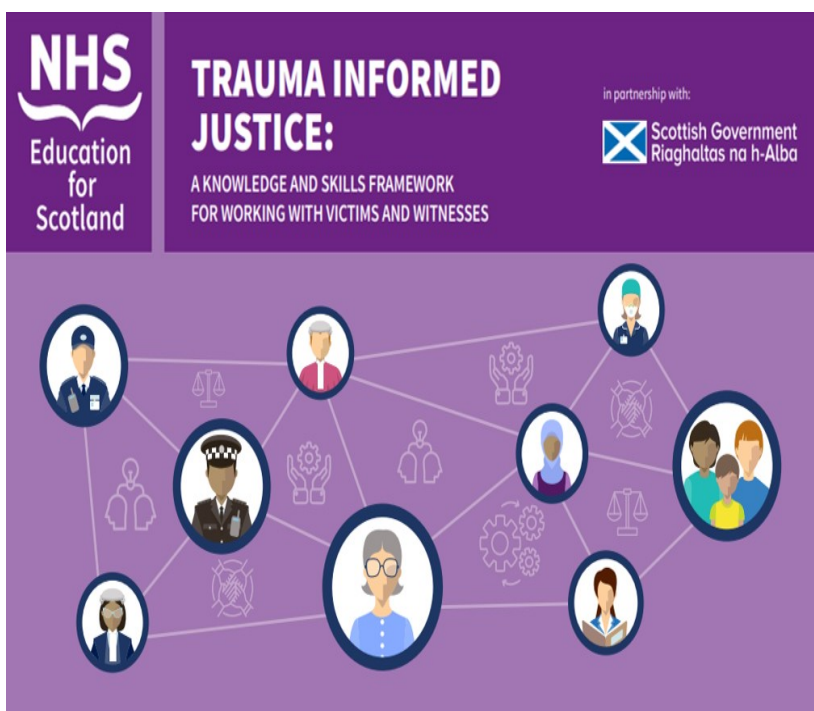
Over the course of the year ahead, we will implement a new finance system that is being introduced across a range of public sector organisations with the support of the Scottish Government, reducing the pressure on staff by automating recurring tasks and providing real-time reports to assist with decision making. As we look to the future, our leadership programmes, coupled with our flexible workforce and succession planning policies, processes and tools, will assist us in maintaining a skilled workforce and developing future leaders who can succeed in an ever changing system.

Trauma informed practice

There is widespread acknowledgement across the justice sector that the way in which complainers and witnesses experience the justice system can sometimes exacerbate the impact of prior trauma, and in some cases re-traumatise. This has a detrimental impact on their ability to participate in the process, can result in a lower quantity and quality of evidence being gathered, and can prevent or delay recovery.

We have worked with partners, including the Scottish Government, members of the Victims Taskforce, and the NHS Education for Scotland, to produce a [Knowledge and Skills Framework for Trauma Informed Justice](#). This framework is designed to help organisations identify and develop training to support trauma informed practice for all those working in the justice system.

Our Education and Learning Unit will support the delivery of trauma informed practice training in line with the Knowledge and Skills Framework. The training will build on the experience our people already have in customer service and support, equipping those working in courts and tribunals to: recognise trauma and behaviours linked to it; understand how and why trauma affects people; helps our people to respond appropriately; and, ultimately, improve justice by ensuring that witnesses are able to give their best evidence.



Corporate reform

Key reform areas

Sustainability

SCTS holds the Carbon Trust Triple Standard (which provides external verification that the organisation is making progress to reduce energy use, carbon emissions, waste and water consumption). The organisation is fully committed to the net zero agenda. A new Sustainability Strategy for 2024-27 has now been developed and **published**. The Strategy sets out how our work to support justice can be done in a way that uses our resources most efficiently and makes a substantial contribution to tackling climate change and to protecting Scotland's environment.

SCTS continues work with the Scottish Government, securing funding to improve building fabric and install solar power. Over the past year the organisation installed a technical solution across the estate that allows more detailed monitoring and control of temperature, occupancy and CO2 levels in our buildings. This will allow us to ensure that heating and ventilation are aligned to building occupancy, improving comfort levels while reducing wastage.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Technology continues to change at an unprecedented rate. Nothing stands still and as new technologies such as AI evolve, we must aim to keep pace. We will explore the potential uses of AI to improve the services we deliver and drive efficiencies. Our initial focus is to will be to consider the potential that advanced Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Generative AI technologies present to enhance the efficiency and accuracy of transcription, summarisation, and translation services.

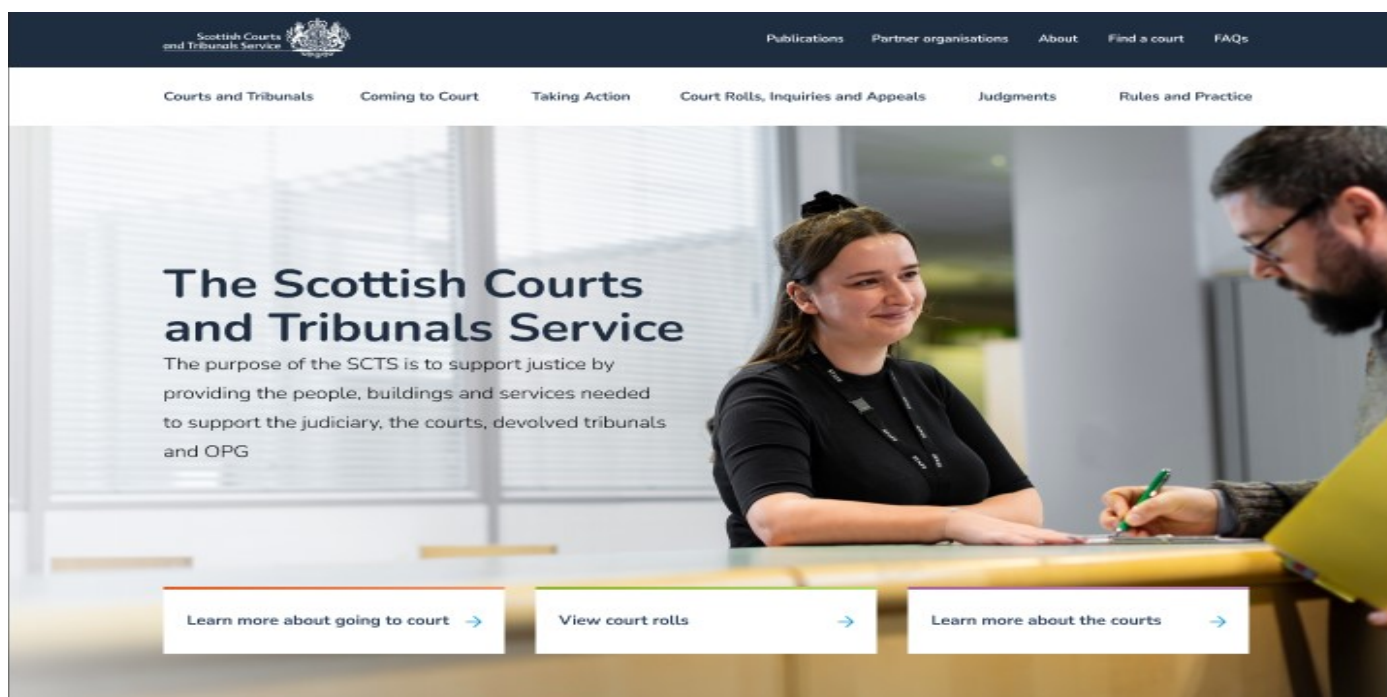
Improving court and tribunal hearing technology

Over the course of this year we will continue to invest in technology to improve the experience of those using our services – be that in virtual, hybrid or physical courts and tribunal hearings. We will also continue to upgrade the level of connectivity across our estate to benefit individuals and other justice organisations who operate from our buildings; improving cellular signal and Wi-Fi coverage and upgrading technology to ensure it remains security compliant.

Web estate

In the past year, SCTS has been re-developing its [core website](#). The new corporate site will be launched in Spring 2024. This will make it easier for the circa 100,000 users every week to access the information they need, modernise the look and feel, and fully meet WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Standards.

Work to review the wider web estate, a total of 13 other sites, has already commenced. An incremental approach to redeveloping these sites will be required. This will commence by gathering user feedback, to ensure the needs of those that require to use our services can obtain the information they need from each site and securely access online services when and where they want.



Our financial environment

Budgets and investment

The Scottish Government's baseline budget for SCTS has been set at £163.2m in 2024-25. In addition to that baseline allocation in-year funding from the Scottish Government is estimated to be £43.9m (detailed at Annex B) giving a total net budget of £207.1m.

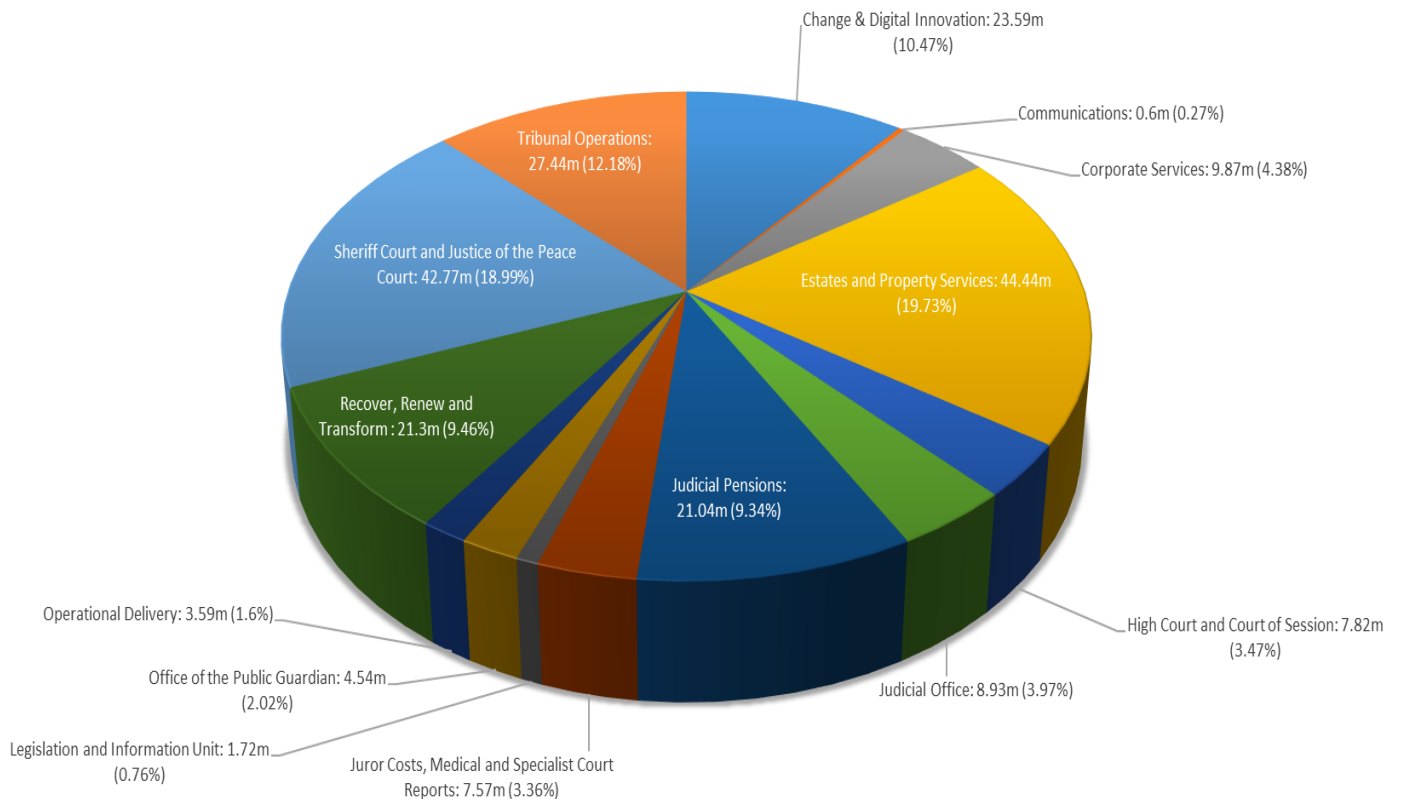
Further detail on the 2024-25 financial plan is provided at [Annex B](#) (p27-28)

SCTS remains committed to delivering high quality services and promoting reform to ensure that Scotland's courts and tribunals continue to meet the expectations of the public within the challenging financial environment and resources available. Our baseline budget supports this work. Most of the in-year funding will support the ongoing court recovery programme and associated initiatives which are part of the Scottish Government's recovery, renewal and transformation (RRT) programme. In-year funding will also be used to meet anticipated levels of growth in the business of the devolved tribunals.

Where do we invest our resources?

When income and depreciation are taken into account, the organisation will have £225.2m with which to fund its activities this year. Figure 1 shows how SCTS allocates its resources by business area. Over 78% of the total gross expenditure, excluding depreciation, is invested directly in supporting front line operations – most significantly in our people. The cost of maintaining a historic estate accounts for approximately 20% of total funding. In line with strategic objectives, SCTS continues to innovate and digitise its service with £23.5m invested in our Change and Digital Innovation function, targeted on strengthening digital infrastructure and innovation whilst maintaining and improving core services. Total budgeted capital expenditure is £17.6m which will be spent on Dundee Justice Hub, Evidence by Commission (EbyC) suites, courtroom technology, digital transformation initiatives and built estate projects/enhancements including RAAC.

Figure 1 - 2024-25: Total spend by area



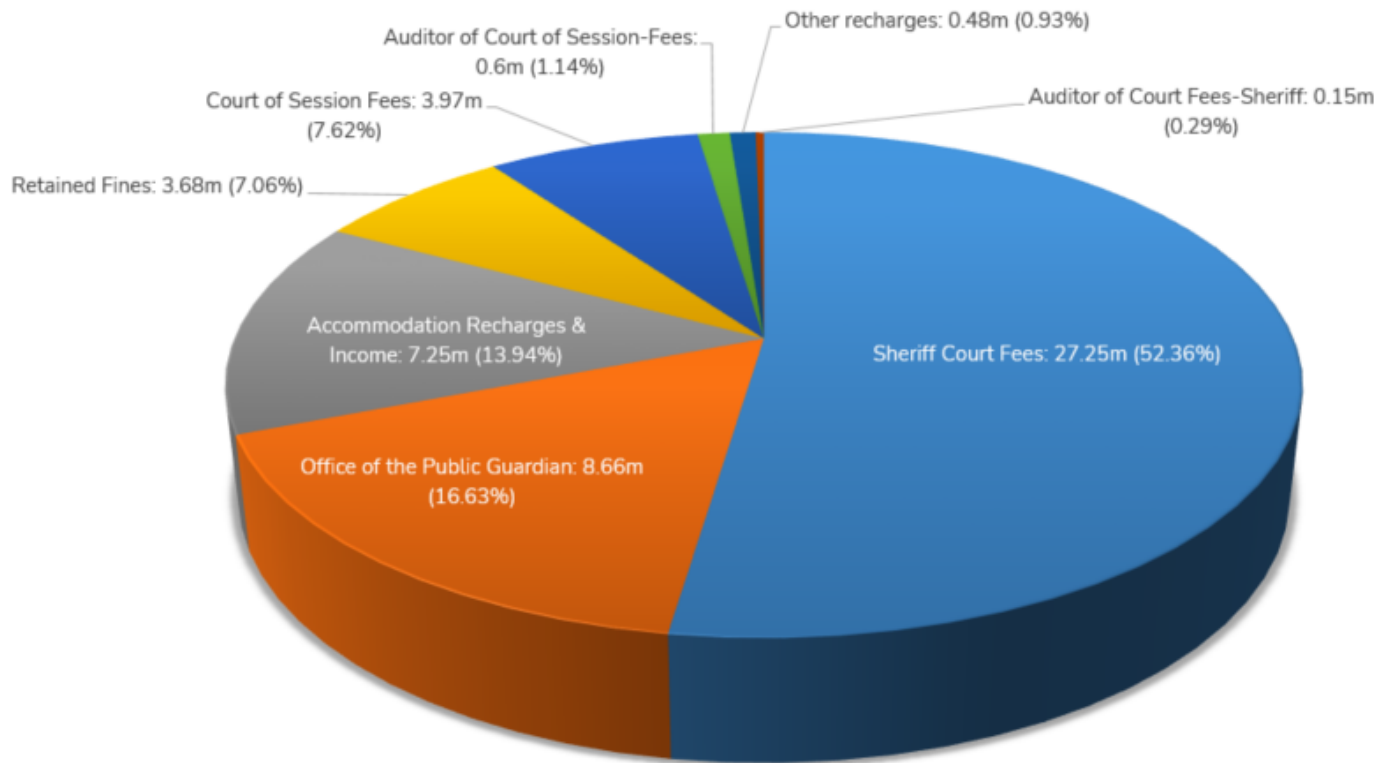
Our financial environment cont.

Fees and income

Income

Total gross income for 2024-25 is projected to be £52.0m, of which 78% relates to civil fees. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of this income by category.

Figure 2 — SCTS gross income 2024-



Tables summarising the financial allocation for 2024-25, broken down by both service area and cost category, can be found at [Annex B](#) (pages 27-28).

Workload trends

Business volumes

In response to the impact of the pandemic on outstanding criminal case levels and the continued trend of increasing solemn case registrations, the criminal court recovery programme commenced in September 2021. An additional 4 trial courts were allocated to the High Court, 2 for Sheriff Solemn business and 10 for Sheriff Summary business. In April 2023, recovery resources were switched from summary to solemn business. A further 2 trial courts were introduced in the High Court and 6 for Sheriff Solemn business, with the simultaneous reduction of 10 trial courts in Sheriff Summary.

[Annex C](#) provides summaries of key business volumes for 2021-22 and 2022-23

It also provides a forecast of 2023-24 volumes and a projection of anticipated business volumes in 2024-25 (p29-32)

The aim of the criminal court recovery programme is to reach a position where the number of scheduled trials across all criminal business types is around 20,000, which represents a manageable level of cases in the system.

Updated modelling was [published](#) in December 2023. This indicates that scheduled trials in the summary criminal court are projected to reach a revised baseline during 2024-25, slightly later than previous modelling had indicated, due to higher than expected levels of case registrations. Solemn business is more challenging as the level of cases entering the system continues to grow – a trend that was apparent before the pandemic and shows no sign of abating. A continued increase in court capacity will be required in the longer-term to address this continued growth. Our modelling indicates that, provided these resources are sustained, it will be possible to reach a stable – albeit higher – level of outstanding High Court cases during 2025, with Sheriff Solemn case levels stabilising during 2026-27. We publish [monthly statistics](#) on criminal case throughput and outstanding case levels, providing the most up to date position on case volumes, throughput and backlogs.

In 2024-25, we are projecting that the number of indictments being registered will rise by 23% for High Court business and 11% for Sheriff Solemn. Summary criminal business continues to represent the highest volume of our work. We expect volume of complaints registered to drop by around 8.5%.

We anticipate that business in both the Court of Session and sheriff civil court jurisdictions will operate at largely the same levels in 2024-25 as it did in 2023-24. In 2023-24, we have seen a rise of approximately 24% of personal injury court registrations in 2023-24 and we expect the same level of business in 2024-25.

Office of the Public Guardian

The level of Powers of Attorney (POA) registrations, and Guardianship Orders, rose by approximately 29% and 10% respectively in 2023-24. We anticipate we will receive the same number of case registrations for both POAs and Guardianship Orders in 2024-25.

Tribunals

Growth in business volumes is projected across a number of chambers in 2024-25. Business volumes for the Social Security Chamber are projected to grow by just over 7,000 cases. This is due to anticipated appeals from claimants of the Adult Disability Payment. Case registration increases in the General Regulatory Chamber (a projected growth of approximately 3,400 appeals), relate to Transport Appeals - from 1 June 2023 the tribunal started to consider penalty charge notices relating to the new Low Emission Zones for Glasgow City Council. This will be followed by Dundee, Aberdeen and Edinburgh in 2024. In December 2023, new regulations were passed that enable local authorities to enforce penalty notices for Dropped Footway Parking, Double Parking and Pavement Parking - and these can also be appealed to the Transport Appeals panel.

On 1 April 2023 the Local Taxation Chamber was created. This deals with council tax, council tax reduction and non domestic rates appeals (these were formerly dealt with by Valuation Appeal Panels and the Council Tax Reduction Review Panel). The large number of receipts for 2023-24 relate to a transfer in of business from the Valuation Appeal Committees.

Business volumes in the Upper Tribunal for Scotland increased significantly in 2023-24. This was because following commencement of the Local Taxation Chamber on 1 April 2023, approximately 2,000 pre-existing cases transferred in to the Upper Tribunal for Scotland (these appeals would have previously been dealt with by the Lands Tribunal for Scotland). The projected business volumes in 2024-25 for the Upper Tribunal has reduced but is still significantly above 2021-22 levels. This is due projected growth in business volumes for the Social Security and General Regulatory Chambers.

Business outcomes and key reform areas 2024-25

Strategic priorities, key reform areas and monitoring performance

Our key reform areas

Our key business outcomes for the year 2024-25 are listed on pages [22 to 25](#). We organise these under our key reform areas: Criminal; Civil; Tribunals and OPG; and Corporate.

We organise delivery of our business under these reform areas

Criminal reform

Civil reform

Tribunals and OPG reform

Corporate reform

Our strategic priorities underpin our work. Activity under each reform area is aligned with our seven strategic priorities. Planning this way helps ensure we are able to maintain focus on the day to day business of running the courts and tribunals whilst delivering the significant reform agenda set by the SCTS Board - assuring that how we organise our work is effective.

SP1	A well supported judiciary	Scotland's judiciary are equipped with support from the right people, systems, technologies and processes to ensure they dispense justice effectively
SP2	Satisfied service users	We inspire confidence through the delivery of a high-quality customer service
SP3	Skilled and motivated people	We support our people to provide excellent customer service - focusing on their performance, learning, resilience and wellbeing
SP4	Sustainability	We provide a high-quality, safe and secure environment for Scotland's courts and tribunals, and we understand climate related risks that impact our estate and operations and develop plans to respond to these
SP5	Digital services	We maximise the opportunities provided by technology to improve processes, access to information and the quality of service we provide
SP6	Efficiency and best value	We have financial stability that enables us to improve our services in an effective, economical and sustainable manner
SP7	Purposeful collaboration	We work with justice bodies to deliver significant change and improvement for Scotland's justice system - through collaboration, communication and reform

Monitoring performance and managing risk

The SCTS Board scrutinises progress against this plan quarterly, alongside consideration of the [Board Scorecard](#) which reports on operational performance against the key indicators listed at [Annex E](#). This plan is supported by more detailed unit plans produced by each business area of the SCTS, which are used by Directors to manage progress in their areas.

SCTS published its [Mainstreaming Equality Report](#) and a new set of Equality Outcomes for 2023-27 in April 2023. The new outcomes are designed to drive our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda, by raising awareness and embedding our EDI aims and objectives throughout SCTS. As per section 3 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, the SCTS publishes a bi-annual Mainstreaming Equality report detailing the progress the organisation has made towards achieving its Equality Outcomes.

The identification and effective management of risk is necessary to ensure that risks to achieving our priorities are identified, assessed, addressed and reviewed. The key corporate risks and our risk appetite are summarised at [Annex D](#). These were reviewed by the Board in February 2024 and are kept under regular review throughout the year. Actions to control and mitigate them are monitored by both the SCTS Executive Team and the SCTS Board's Audit and Risk Committee.

Plan on a page

Business outcomes 2024-25

Timescale Apr 24 - May - Jun - Jul - Aug - Sept - Oct - Nov - Dec - Jan - Feb - Mar 25

Click in any of the reform icons below to see the outcomes in full



Criminal Reform

Continuation of Criminal Court Recovery Programme, measuring progress against modelled analysis

Supporting the judiciary to minimise the number of summary cases set down for trial through improved judicial case management and early disclosure of evidence

Building our capacity for commission hearings to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation of witnesses

Taking a trauma informed approach to the development of new systems and services

Develop our digital capability to increase flexibility and resilience in the management of criminal business through enhancing the types of business that can be dealt with virtually and streamlining the jury process



Civil Reform

Enabling ordinary cause cases to be raised and tracked online in our Sheriff Courts

Providing solicitors in the Court of Session with access to their cases electronically via Civil Online

Enhancing access to justice by increasing the number of cases that can be live-streamed

Adapting our civil online systems, and providing support in their use, to ensure they are accessible to everyone

Ensuring our case management systems and processes keep pace with changes in law or procedure



Tribunals and OPG Reform

Supporting the continued expansion of Scottish Tribunals

Developing our Tribunals hearing strategy to make better use of digital initiatives - ensuring service users and the judiciary have access to the right hearing modality

Launching phase one of the new OPG case management system

Implementing a tailored approach to managing guardianship account reviews

Work with Scottish Government to ensure our systems and processes keep pace with changes in law or procedure



Corporate

Implementing Scottish Government's new finance system, enhancing tracking and reporting on spend and budgets

Investing in our estates and utilising technology to help take informed decision on energy usage

Implement flexible workforce and succession planning policies to adapt to internal and external changes – including the move towards a 35-hour working week

Implement the Knowledge and Skills Framework for Trauma Informed Justice and develop processes to address risk of vicarious trauma

Invest in technology to enhance the level of connectivity across our estate and improve user experience

Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence to improve the quality and efficiency of our work

Criminal justice reform

Business outcomes 2024-25



Supporting justice by developing a world class service for criminal court users – providing optimum digital solutions to support staff, the Judiciary and partners in the delivery of fair, accessible, effective and efficient criminal justice, inspiring confidence in all who use it

Business Plan outcomes 2024-25		Aligned strategic priorities
1.	Through the court recovery programme we will continue to deliver additional court capacity to reduce scheduled criminal trials, while managing increasing indictment levels. Progress will be measured against modelling and publishing monthly data reports. (monitor quarterly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Sustainability Purposeful collaboration
2.	We will implement the judicially-led Summary Case Management pilot evaluation recommendations to minimise the number of trials unnecessarily scheduled, securing early pleas and decisions on discontinuation of cases through judicial case management and early disclosure of evidence. (monitor quarterly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied service users Digital services Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration
3.	We will create a further two evidence by commission suites, building capacity for commission hearings to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation and allow the best possible evidence to be captured earlier – in line with the recommendations of the “Improving the Management of Sexual Offence Cases” review. (March 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied service users Digital services Purposeful collaboration
4.	We will deliver our ambition to become a trauma informed organisation, embedding the principles and approach in the development of new systems and services - including the development of the proposed statutory sexual offences court. (March 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Digital services Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration
5.	<p>We will continue to build our digital capability to increase flexibility and resilience in the management of criminal business, specifically –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working towards deploying a specialist, trauma informed, domestic abuse virtual court model in the sheriffdom of Grampian Highland and Islands Supporting the judicially-led project to establish virtual custody courts Expanding our capacity to host remote evidence by Police and Expert witnesses in our sheriff and Jury courts Commencing development of new digital systems to streamline and improve the jury process – delivering efficiencies and improved service. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration

Civil justice reform

Business outcomes 2024-25



To support the judiciary in the delivery of world class civil justice by leading and inspiring user-centred change to create more efficient and accessible services for all

Business Plan outcomes 2024-25		Aligned strategic priorities
1.	We will enable ordinary cause cases in the Sheriff Courts to be raised and tracked via Civil Online, increasing the proportion of cases in which electronic submission is available from the commencement of proceedings. (January 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Digital services
2.	We will provide solicitors in the Court of Session with access to their cases electronically via Civil Online, giving them the ability to track cases electronically, submit non-initiating case documents, and complete the migration of active cases from our legacy case management system - providing consistency of process for solicitor firms and improving efficiency for administrative staff. (March 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied service users Skilled & Motivated People Digital Services
3.	We will improve the openness of the courts by increasing the number and type of cases that can be live streamed. (February 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied service users Skilled & Motivated People Digital services
4.	We will continue to gather information from users that enables us to adapt our civil online systems, considering both service accessibility and support in its use - allowing those services to be accessible to everyone. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Purposeful collaboration
5.	We will ensure that our case management systems and processes keep pace with changes in law or procedure promoted by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Civil Justice Council. (March 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Digital services Purposeful collaboration

Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian reform

Business outcomes 2024-25



To provide high quality access to justice for Tribunals users and protection for vulnerable people and their families through the Power of Attorney and guardianship systems - by developing efficient, fair, user-friendly and responsive services

Business Plan outcomes 2024-25		Aligned strategic priorities
1.	We will support the continued expansion of Scottish Tribunals and the continued increase in business volumes across a number of chambers, supporting the judiciary and working collaboratively with the Scottish Government. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Purposeful collaboration
2.	We will continue developing the tribunals hearing strategy to make best use of digital initiatives, expanding in-person proceedings and the hybrid hearing model to ensure our service users and judiciary have access to the right hearing modality and technology with sufficient flexibility to support accessible, efficient and effective outcomes. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Digital services Efficiency and best value
3.	We will launch phase 1 of the new OPG case management system, enabling faster processing of Power of Attorney applications; and providing a platform for the future development of an improved electronic submission system and the ability for members of the public to amend existing powers of attorney online, improving speed and quality of service. (February 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Digital services
4.	We will implement a tailored approach to managing guardianship account reviews, improving performance and enhancing the protection of those with incapacity. (December 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Efficiency and best value
5.	We will work collaboratively with the Scottish Government to ensure that our systems and processes keep pace with changes in law, supporting the judiciary to ensure our tribunals are accessible, efficient and effective and the Public Guardian can ensure the protection of the most vulnerable. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Purposeful collaboration

Corporate reform

Business outcomes 2024-25



To give our people the systems, processes, facilities and skills to deliver the best possible service, allowing justice to be done fairly, effectively and efficiently

Business Plan outcomes 2024-25	Aligned strategic priorities
<p>1. We will work with the Scottish Government to implement their new finance system for public bodies – automating recurring tasks, improving analysis and insight. (October 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied service users • Digital services • Efficiency and best value • Purposeful collaboration
<p>2. We will continue to invest in our estate as resources allow, utilising new technology to monitor our buildings, to help us take informed decisions around energy usage in support of efficiency and sustainability. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied service users • Digital services • Efficiency and best value • Sustainability
<p>3. We will continue to develop and implement flexible workforce and succession planning policies, processes and tools so SCTS can adapt to internal and external changes – including the move towards a 35-hour working week. (December 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled and motivated people • Satisfied service users • Efficiency and best value • Purposeful collaboration
<p>4. We will work in collaboration with the Victims Taskforce and NHS Education for Scotland to implement the Knowledge and Skills Framework for Trauma Informed Justice across the organisation, delivering trauma training according to needs and developing processes to address the risk of vicarious trauma. (Ongoing throughout 2024-25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied service users • Skilled and motivated people • Digital services • Efficiency and best value
<p>5. We will invest in technology to improve the services we provide, rolling out enhanced Wi-Fi and upgrades to court and tribunal hearing technology that will support secure and effective virtual, hybrid and physical business. (January 2025)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied service users • Skilled and motivated people • Digital services
<p>6. We will explore and test the potential for Artificial Intelligence to improve the quality and efficiency of our work, with an initial focus on transcription, summarisation, and translation services. (February 2025)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied service users • Skilled and motivated people • Digital services

Annex A - The Vision for Justice in Scotland

The [Vision for Justice](#) document was published in 2022 and sets out the Scottish Government's transformative vision for the justice sector for this parliamentary term and beyond. The Vision was accompanied by a Year One Delivery Plan setting out the existing commitments, at that time, from justice agencies. A [Three Year Delivery Plan](#) was published in November 2023 setting out work being delivered up to March 2026. The delivery plan includes various initiatives SCTS is aiming to deliver and which is detailed in our [Corporate Plan 2023-26](#).

The purpose of this [Three Year Delivery Plan](#) is to build on the initial plan, providing a high level overview of work being undertaken across the justice sector over the subsequent three years up to March 2026. One of the principles which underpins the Vision is that it is evidence-based. It states that "justice services will implement transformative actions which are informed, funded and prioritised by recognised, credible and robust evidence, and are routinely monitored, evaluated and reviewed. As part of this principle, a [measurement framework](#) for the Vision has been developed. It provides information on the progress towards the high level outcomes outlined in the Vision.



Annex B - Summary financial plan

2024-25 - Financial summary by cost category

Cost Category (£000's)	2024-25 Budget Bill	In Year Funding	2024-25 Total Budget
Pay	84,715	7,493	92,208
Other Staff Costs	475	11	486
Rent & Rates	10,099	-	10,099
Accommodation	16,129	187	16,316
Building Maintenance	6,012	-	6,012
Judicial Costs	2,107	503	2,610
Judicial Pensions	14,906	6,138	21,044
Tribunal Members fees	8,336	7,438	15,774
Office & Other	10,609	417	11,026
Supplies & Services	2,125	-	2,125
Training	428	8	436
Travel	572	23	595
RRT	-	21,300	21,300
Business Costs	156,514	43,518	200,032
Total Operational Costs	7,219	346	7,565

Total Revenue Expenditure	163,733	43,864	207,597
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Fees for Civil Cases	(40,627)	-	(40,627)
Rents Receivable	(7,254)	-	(7,254)
Recharges	(484)	-	(484)
Retained Fines	(3,676)	-	(3,676)
Total Receipts	(52,041)	-	(52,041)

Net Revenue Expenditure	111,692	43,864	155,556
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Capital			
Buildings	6,899	-	6,899
Furniture & Fittings	-	-	-
Digital Infrastructure	10,062	47	10,109
ROU Lease	628	-	628
Total Capital Expenditure	17,589	47	17,636

Non-Cash Ring Fenced DEL Depreciation	33,881	-	33,881
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Total Net Expenditure	163,162	43,911	207,073
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A commentary on the financial environment and budget can be found at pages 17-18 of this plan

Annex B - Summary financial plan

2024-25 - Financial summary by service area

Budgets 2024/25 - Financial Summary by Service Area			
Service Area (£000's)	Revenue	Capital	Total
Change & Digital Innovation	15,590	8,002	23,593
Communications	603	-	603
Corporate Services	9,833	35	9,868
Estates and Property Services	34,915	9,527	44,442
High Court and Court of Session	7,816	-	7,816
Judicial Office	8,933	-	8,933
Judicial Pensions	21,044	-	21,044
Juror Costs, Medical and Specialist Court Reports	7,565	-	7,565
Legislation and Information Unit	1,716	-	1,716
Office of the Public Guardian	4,545	-	4,545
Operational Delivery	3,569	25	3,594
Recover, Renew and Transform	21,300	-	21,300
Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court	42,773	-	42,773
Tribunal Operations	27,394	47	27,441
Total Direct & Operational Costs	207,597	17,636	225,233
Receipts	(52,041)	-	(52,041)
Total Net Expenditure before depreciation	155,556	17,636	173,192
Non-Cash Ring Fenced DEL Depreciation	33,881	-	33,881
Total Net Expenditure	189,437	17,636	207,073

A commentary on the financial environment and budget can be found at pages 17-18 of this plan

Annex C - Key business volumes and planning assumptions

Supreme Courts, Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Courts, Office of the Public Guardian

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 Forecast	2024-25 (Projection)
High Court				
High Court judge days	4,201	4,541	4,848	5,070
Indictments registered	823	1,038	1,012	1,250
Trials Evidence Led	577	611	683	695
High Court: criminal appeals lodged	450	521	624	620
Court of Session				
Court of Session judge days	1,369	995	1,014	1,000
Ordinary Civil Actions registered	1,012	919	966	1,000
Proofs proceeding	90	55	68	70
Court of Session: civil appeals/reclaiming motions	151	119	74	100
Civil Petitions registered	990	1,107	1,131	1,100
All-Scotland Courts				
Sheriff Appeal Court – criminal appeals lodged	323	291	325	325
Sheriff Appeal Court – civil appeals lodged	189	214	162	180
Personal Injury Court: registrations	3,321	4,129	5,133	5,100
Sheriff Courts				
Sheriff Court sitting days	27,610	29,624	30,019	30,000
Sheriff Courts: Summary				
Complaints registered	55,506	57,226	65,759	60,000
Trials Evidence Led	5,503	6,380	5,467	5,500
Sheriff Courts: Solemn				
Sheriff and jury indictments registered	5,759	5,938	7,547	8,400
Sheriff and jury trials where evidence led	907	1,061	1,279	1,300
Sheriff Courts: Civil				
Ordinary Cause registered	21,144	21,344	21,678	21,500
OC Proofs and Debates proceeding	463	515	504	500
Summary Cause/Small Claims/Simple Proc reg'd	26,923	33,316	32,000	32,000
SC Proofs Proceeding	316	332	266	270
JP Courts				
Complaints registered	23,557	21,756	19,302	19,000
Trials Evidence Led	518	999	920	900
Office of the Public Guardian				
Powers of Attorney registered	57,819	62,062	80,159	80,500
Guardianship Orders registered	2,763	3,146	3,464	3,500
Access to funds orders registered	179	171	189	190
Intervention orders registered	505	502	570	570

Annex C - Key business volumes and planning assumptions

Upper Tribunal, First-tier and other Tribunals the SCTS administers

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (Forecast)	2024-25 (Projection)
Upper Tribunal for Scotland				
Receipts	43	37	2,513	263
Disposals	30	48	1,676	607
Hearing Days	36	32	52	398
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (General Regulatory Chamber)				
Charity Appeals				
Receipts	0	0	0	1
Disposals	0	0	0	1
Hearing Days	0	0	0	1
Parking and Bus Lane Appeals (Becomes Transport Appeals Summer 2023)				
Receipts	727	1,021	-	-
Disposals	670	770	-	-
Hearing Days	34	38	-	-
Transport Appeals (From Summer 2023)				
Receipts	-	-	1,300	4,750
Disposals	-	-	1,083	3,850
Hearing Days	-	-	53	410
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Health and Education Chamber)				
Additional Support Needs				
Receipts	133	202	220	242
Disposals	131	183	217	223
Hearing Days	45	55	96	105
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber)				
Letting Agents				
Receipts	47	71	76	81
Disposals	52	67	62	74
Hearing Days	42	64	42	30
Case Management Discussion Days	-	-	57	47
Private Rented Sector				
Receipts	2,760	3,873	4,117	4,364
Disposals	2,497	3,280	3,752	4,145
Hearing Days	326.5	293	338	370
Case Management Discussion Days	1,340	1,360	1,364	1,376

Annex C - Key business volumes and planning assumptions

Upper Tribunal, First-tier and other Tribunals the SCTS administers

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 Forecast	2024-25 (Projection)
Property Factor				
Receipts	201	256	328	328
Disposals	189	232	252	298
Hearing Days	136	163	95	76
Case Management Discussion Days	-	-	174	152
Rent & Repairs				
Receipts	166	180	211	247
Disposals	164	205	166	286
Hearing Days	262	190	193	216
Right of Entry <i>(Cases are disposed of by decision rather than hearing)</i>				
Receipts	161	183	153	153
Disposals	138	203	160	150
Decisions	80	129	137	120
Third Party				
Receipts	31	65	102	120
Disposals	28	44	66	90
Hearing Days	64	96	109	132
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Local Taxation Chamber) <i>(SCTS assumed responsibility April 2023)</i>				
Local Taxation				
Receipts	-	-	41,419	600
Disposals	-	-	4,507	39,294
Hearing Days	-	-	91	278
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Social Security Chamber)				
Social Security				
Receipts	54	147	2491	9,700
Disposals	57	54	851	8,754
Hearing Days	11	35	589	4,293
First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Tax Chamber)				
Tax				
Receipts	10	13	22	24
Disposals	8	19	12	12
Hearing Days	13	6	2	12

Annex C - Key business volumes and planning assumptions

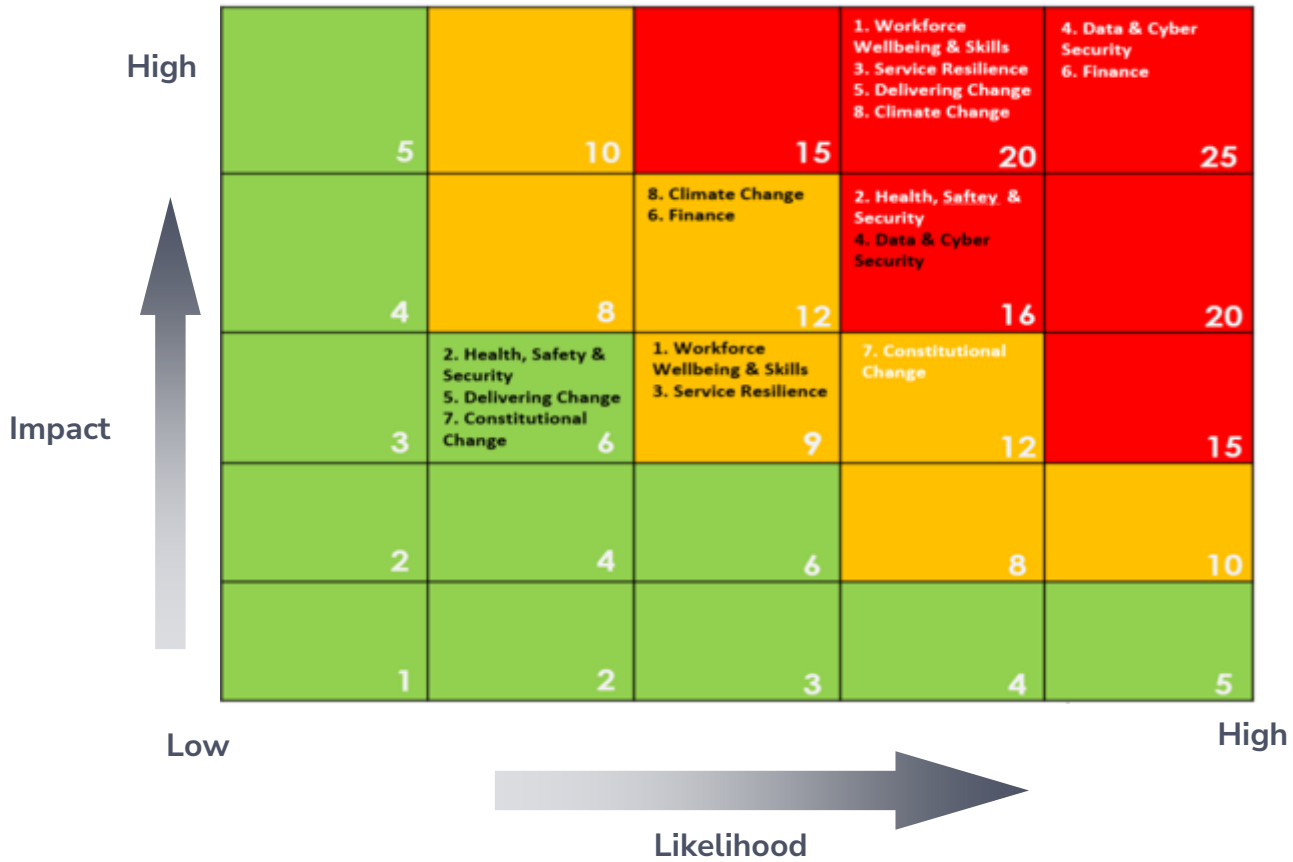
Upper Tribunal, First-tier and other Tribunals the SCTS administers

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (Forecast)	2024-25 (Projection)
Council Tax Reduction Review Panel <i>(Functions transferred to the Local Taxation Chamber April 2023)</i>				
Receipts	48	40	-	-
Disposals	45	48	-	-
Hearing Days	26	27	-	-
Lands Tribunal for Scotland <i>(Responsibility transferred to the Supreme Courts from 10 January 2022)</i>				
Receipts	545	339	150	160
Disposals	223	547	165	180
Hearing Days	34	57.5	37	42
Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland				
Mental Health				
Receipts	5,105	5,314	5,422	5,639
Disposals	4,741	5,062	5,246	5,468
Hearing Days	3,351	3,879	3,939	4,213
Excessive Security				
Receipts	32	26	40	30
Disposals	28	24	45	30
Hearing Days	29	21	37	36
Pensions Appeal Tribunal Scotland				
Receipts	172	152	139	128
Disposals	232	244	180	169
Hearing Days	47	63	57	56

Annex D - Key strategic risk categories and corporate risks

Strategic risk categories identified and mapped by the SCTS Board

(White text = Untreated Risk, Black Text = Treated Risk)



Strategic risk category	Principal corporate risk monitored by SCTS Board and Audit and Risk Committee
Workforce wellbeing and skills	Failure to maintain a skilled, motivated, resilient and adaptable workforce to support daily business, medium-term recovery and longer-term change.
Health, safety and security	Significant Health and Safety or security breach caused by accidents or intentional acts.
Service resilience and continuity	Essential business and services compromised due to critical incident(s).
Data and cyber security	Significant data/system loss caused by failure in information management controls or cyber-attack.
Change management	Ineffective planning and/or delivery of change impacts on delivery of core business or reform programme.
Finance and resourcing	Financial pressures impact on delivery of core business or reform programme.
Constitutional and regulatory change	High-profile constitutional issues and regulatory changes require effective intervention from the courts and/or impact on business delivery/reform.
Climate change	Failure to meet Scottish Government's ambitious Climate change targets (net zero by 2045).

Annex D - Risk appetite

SCTS corporate risk appetite statement and levels

The SCTS Board has agreed the below strategic risk appetite statement to convey the organisation's current approach to risk management. This is based on a high level corporate statement plus five appetite levels that are assigned to each corporate risk.

SCTS Risk Appetite Statement

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service approach to risk is founded on the importance of maintaining public trust and confidence in the justice system, in line with our purpose - 'Supporting Justice'.

Our approach to risk is based on the need to deliver our essential services in an effective, resilient, innovative and compassionate way. We manage risk to ensure that we provide a safe environment for all service users and staff – minimising exposure to reputational, operational, technical, security and compliance (or statutory) risks. At the same time, we recognise the need to accept and encourage higher levels of risk in some areas – to support innovation, to pilot new approaches and to maintain or improve levels in service the face of future challenges, including an uncertain economic and environmental outlook.

Our risk appetite is kept under review to ensure it is flexible, proportionate and fit-for-purpose. It supports sound decision-making and helps our people to be creative in their work to deliver the best experience for service users. Acceptance of any risk is based on ensuring that the potential impacts and benefits are fully understood, with appropriate controls put in place.

This statement will be reviewed at least annually by the SCTS Board and its Committees, as part of their overall review of Corporate Risk.

Risk Appetite Levels

Appetite Levels	Statements
Very Low (adverse)	SCTS is very reluctant to accept risks at this level. Avoidance of risk is essential in achievement our core strategic or statutory objectives and priorities.
Low (minimalist)	SCTS aims to take decisions/undertake activities that are considered safe in achieving objectives at this level. This means the pursuit of opportunity is not a key driver.
Medium (cautious)	SCTS is willing to accept a degree of risk in order to deliver objectives at this level. Risks are deemed controllable and can be considered if resources exist to absorb potential increased costs, without impacting on key services or operational performance.
High (open)	SCTS aims to undertake activities that have a high degree of VFM, with stretching targets and the likelihood of success being a determining factor at this level. Failure in specific projects may be viable provided core ambitions/strategic priorities are not threatened.
Very High (hungry)	SCTS is keen to take risks and to innovate to maximise opportunities at this level – provided these are in keeping with our legal obligations, values and policies.

Risk Appetite aligned to corporate risks

	SCTS RISK	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
1	Workforce, Wellbeing & Skills		X			
2	Health, Safety & Security	X				
3	Service Resilience & Continuity		X			
4	Data & Cyber Security		X			
5	Delivering Change & Post-Pandemic Reform				X	
6	Finance & Resources			X		
7	Constitutional & Regulatory Change			X		
8	Climate Change			X		

Annex E - Strategic priorities by reform area 2023-26

SCTS strategic objectives

SP1	A well supported judiciary	Scotland's judiciary are equipped with support from the right people, systems, technologies and processes to ensure they dispense justice effectively
SP2	Satisfied service users	We inspire confidence through the delivery of a high-quality customer service
SP3	Skilled and motivated people	We support our people to provide excellent customer service - focusing on their performance, learning, resilience and wellbeing
SP4	Sustainability	We provide a high-quality, safe and secure environment for Scotland's courts and tribunals, and we understand climate related risks that impact our estate and operations and develop plans to respond to these
SP5	Digital services	We maximise the opportunities provided by technology to improve processes, access to information and the quality of service we provide
SP6	Efficiency and best value	We have financial stability that enables us to improve our services in an effective, economical and sustainable manner
SP7	Purposeful collaboration	We work with justice bodies to deliver significant change and improvement for Scotland's justice system - through collaboration, communication and reform

SCTS key reform areas

Criminal justice reform	Supporting justice by developing world class services for criminal court users - providing optimum digital solutions to support staff, the judiciary and partners in the delivery of fair, accessible, effective and efficient criminal justice, inspiring confidence in all who use it
Civil justice reform	To support the judiciary in the delivery of world class civil justice by leading and
Tribunals and OPG reform	To provide high-quality access to justice for Tribunals' users, and protection for vulnerable people and their families through the power of attorney and guardianship systems - by developing efficient, fair, user-friendly and responsive services
Corporate reform	To give our people the systems, processes, facilities and skills to deliver the best possible service, allowing justice to be done fairly, effectively and efficiently

Annex E - Corporate Plan 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities

Criminal justice reform		Strategic priority alignment
Supporting justice by developing a world class service for criminal court users – providing optimum digital solutions to support staff, the Judiciary and partners in the delivery of fair, accessible, effective and efficient criminal justice, inspiring confidence in all who use it		
1.	We will reduce criminal case backlogs and waiting times by delivering additional court capacity to support recovery and address unacceptable periods of delay	Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Purposeful collaboration
2.	We will minimise disruption to victims and witnesses, whilst protecting the rights of the accused, by supporting the judiciary to minimise the number of summary cases that are set down for trial unnecessarily, reducing late pleas of guilty and decisions on discontinuation of cases - delivered through judicial case management and early disclosure of evidence	Satisfied service users Sustainability Digital services
3.	We will support implementation of the recommendations made in the Lord Justice Clerk’s Review – “Improving the Management of Sexual Offence Cases” – by effectively managing the growing level of complex cases and providing a supportive trauma informed approach	Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Purposeful collaboration
4.	We will enable greater use of evidence by commission, reducing the risk of re-traumatisation and allowing the best possible evidence to be heard, while safeguarding the rights of the accused	Satisfied service users Sustainable buildings and business Digital services
5.	We will build on our use of technology to increase flexibility and resilience in the management of criminal business – exploring the possibility of deploying a specialist virtual domestic abuse court model; making best use of virtual approaches for custody and procedural business and expanding our capacity to host remote evidence by Police and Expert witnesses in our sheriff courts	Satisfied service users Digital services Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration

Civil justice reform		Strategic priority alignment
To support the judiciary in the delivery of world class civil justice by leading and inspiring user-centred change to create more efficient and accessible services for all		
1.	We will transform our civil justice systems, developing a fully digital end-to-end service across all civil business types – increasing flexibility, efficiency and resilience. This will enable all case documentation to be submitted and viewed online; the tracking of case progress and receipt of notifications when new documents are available	Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Sustainability Digital services Efficiency and best value
2.	We will ensure that civil business is effectively managed, evidence can be presented digitally and assisted digital support allows those services to be accessible to everyone by developing our court hearing technology to enable hybrid or fully virtual hearings in all appropriate cases	Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Sustainability Digital services Efficiency and best value
3.	We will improve access to, and the transparency of, civil courts through the implementation of public video access or live streaming in appropriate hearings	Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Digital services Efficiency and best value
4.	We will support the Scottish Civil Justice Council and the Scottish Government by adapting our systems to deal with changes to transform the civil justice system in Scotland	Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Sustainability Digital services Efficiency and best value

Annex E - Corporate Plan 2023-2026 Strategic Priorities

Tribunals and OPG reform		
To provide high quality access to administrative justice for Tribunals users and protection for vulnerable people and their families through the power of attorney and guardianship systems - by developing efficient, fair, user-friendly and responsive services		Strategic priority alignment
1.	We will continue to manage the expansion of the Scottish Tribunals to create a responsive, efficient and fair system that makes best use of technology, judicial and staff resources	Well supported judiciary Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration
2.	We will improve access to the specialist jurisdictions across Scotland's devolved tribunals by establishing a hearings strategy that makes best use of digital case management, in-person and virtual proceedings	Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Digital services Efficiency and best value
3.	We will provide a platform for transforming and modernising the Office of the Public Guardian by launching a new case management system that will improve accessibility, efficiency and resilience, and help reduce backlogs and delays	Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Digital services Efficiency and best value
4.	We will develop and implement a strategy for OPG/AoC to enhance its public role in increasing the protection available to those with incapacity, promoting greater take-up of PoAs, improved investigations and proactively supporting improvements to the legislative framework	Well supported judiciary Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration

Corporate reform		
To give our people the systems, processes, facilities and skills to deliver the best possible service, allowing justice to be done fairly, effectively and efficiently		Strategic priority alignment
1.	We will enable our people to focus on higher quality work and provide improved service by upgrading our core systems and ways of working in finance and HR, automating recurring tasks, improving intelligence and compliance	Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people Digital services Efficiency and best value
2.	We will continue to invest in the skills, wellbeing and talent of our people to improve knowledge and creativity by modernising our systems to ensure our people can access information and learning required to support their day to day work, supporting new ways of working, and sustaining a diverse, talented, trauma informed workforce	Well supported judiciary Satisfied service users Skilled and motivated people
3.	We will enable the public and staff to securely access services when and where they want – conducting cash-free, paper-free transactions by enhancing our web presence and the range of services available through it, as online access to our services continues to grow	Satisfied service users Sustainability Digital services Efficiency and best value
4.	We will develop detailed plans to reduce our carbon footprint to address the challenging reduction targets set for the public sector – assessing how our business model could achieve net-zero by 2045, whilst investing in our facilities and supporting all who use them to make low carbon choices	Sustainability Digital services Efficiency and best value Purposeful collaboration

Annex F - Summary of key performance indicators

Performance against the KPI measures is monitored quarterly by the SCTS Board, using its Performance Scorecard published on our website, assessing a range of measures relating to delivery of our seven Strategic Priorities. These are summarised below.

1. A well supported judiciary

1a Judicial satisfaction levels (Assessment of most recent judicial attitudes survey plus qualitative assessment by SCTS Executive Team)

2. Satisfied service users

2a User satisfaction levels (based on quantitative survey and assessment data, including SCTS Court User Survey Data)

2b Delivery our Change Programme

3. Skilled and motivated people

3a Employee engagement levels (based on staff turnover, absence levels, complaints and grievance monitoring and survey data)

3b Delivery of development activities (based on proportion of staff who have engaged in and completed key learning and development activities)

4. Sustainability

4a Maintaining the estate (assessment of investment levels to ensure backlog maintenance is being managed effectively)

4b Sustainability and carbon reduction (assessment of the extent to which the organisation is meeting agreed carbon reduction targets)

5. Digital services

5a Automated and online transactions (assessment of the proportion of online fines transactions and payments made via automated systems)

5b IT resilience and service (assessment of the resilience of core SCTS systems available for use when required)

6. Efficiency and best value

6a High Court business recovery (assessment of measures aligned to [COVID-19 Criminal Court Recovery Modelling](#))

6b Sheriff Court solemn business recovery (assessment of measures aligned to Sheriff solemn [COVID-19 Criminal Court Recovery Modelling](#))

6c Sheriff court summary business recovery (assessment of measures aligned to Sheriff summary [COVID-19 Criminal Court Recovery Modelling](#))

6d Justice of the Peace Court business recovery (assessment of three operational indicator aligned to business recovery)

6e Civil and miscellaneous business waiting times (assessment of 10 indicators measuring waiting times for civil and appellate business and guardianship orders administered by Office of the Public Guardian)

6f Effective Tribunals Operations (assessment of 21 key operational indicators measuring effective administration)

6g Delivering on our change programme (assessment of the delivery status on progress the SCTS is making towards meeting its outcomes)

7. Purposeful collaboration

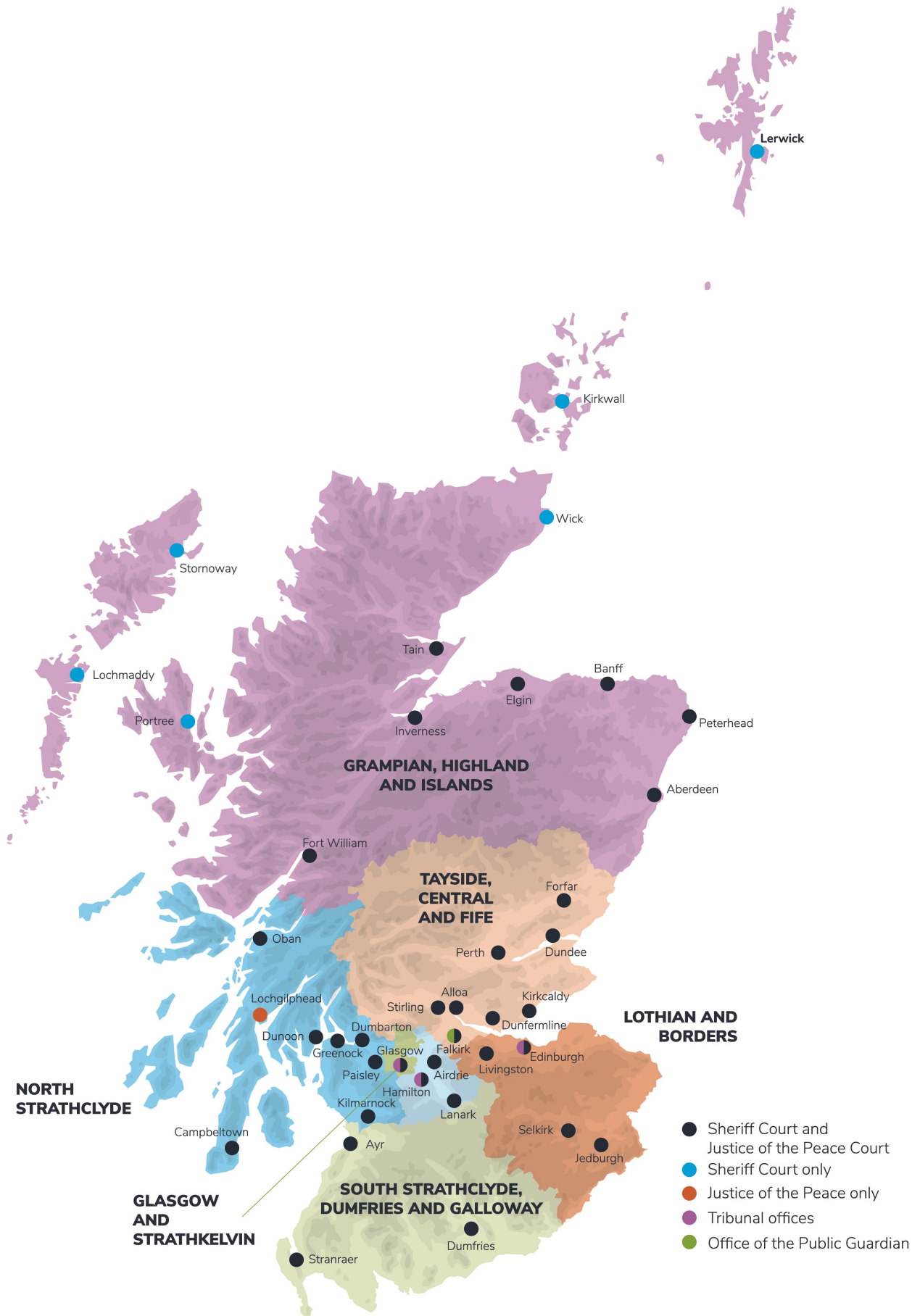
7a Sufficient and effective collaboration (analysis of the overall quality and quantity of collaboration between the SCTS and key partner agencies)

8. Financial indicators

8a Expenditure profile (comparison of actual expenditure with profiled expenditure to the year end to ensure robust budgeting)

8b Fines and fees income (comparison of actual fines and fees income received with profiled income to the year end to ensure robust profiling)

Annex G - Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service locations



Further information

SCTS website

www.scotcourts.gov.uk

SCTS Reports and Data

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/reports-data

SCTS Board

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/the-scottish-court-service-board

Office of the Public Guardian

www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk

Scottish Tribunals

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/the-tribunals/about-scottish-tribunals>

Other Courts and Tribunals

<http://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/the-tribunals/other-courts-and-tribunals>

Judicial Office for Scotland

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/judicial-office-for-scotland

Scottish Government

<http://www.gov.scot>

Scottish Civil Justice Council

www.scottishciviljusticecouncil.gov.uk

Scottish Sentencing Council

<https://www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk>

Vision for Justice in Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/vision-justice-scotland/>

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

Tel: 0131 444 3300

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