

CORPORATE PLAN



2023-26

Corporate Plan 2023-26

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service in
pursuance of section 66(4)(a) of the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008

April 2023

Contents

4 Chairman's foreword	5 Chief executive's introduction	6-11 About SCTS	6-7 Our purpose and values Supporting Justice
8 Strategic priorities and key reform areas	9 Supporting Scotland	10-11 Our structure	12-14 Trends, challenges and opportunities
15-24 Key reform areas	15-17 Criminal justice reform	18-19 Civil justice reform	20-21 Tribunals and OPG reform
22-24 Corporate reform	25-30 Strategic objectives	31 Monitoring progress and performance	32-34 Annexes and further information



Chairman's foreword

Rt. Hon. Lord Carloway, Lord President

SCTS Board Chairman

This Corporate Plan sets out the strategic priorities and objectives of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service to 2026.

The COVID-19 pandemic dominated the 2020-23 corporate planning period. Although challenging, it transformed the landscape in which we now operate. Many of the changes introduced accelerated us towards the vision which we had previously only imagined. As we move into a new planning period, and look back on the past, we can be positive about the future.

There are some problems to be solved. The level of outstanding criminal trials, and the delays which result, impacts adversely on complainers, witnesses and the accused alike. Tackling this will be a key objective. It will require the assistance of both branches of the legal profession and, critically, government funding. The criminal court recovery programme commenced in September 2021. Outstanding summary trials should return to pre-pandemic levels by March 2024. Solemn business is more difficult to predict. The number of indictments is continuing to rise, particularly in relation to sexual offending. These cases can be evidentially complex and take some time to resolve. Detailed modelling predicts that outstanding High Court trials will recover to a new baseline level by March 2025 and sheriff solemn by March 2026. This may turn out to be optimistic, depending on the volume of indictments.

A key component in the transformation of our criminal justice system is the implementation of the Lord Justice Clerk's Review into the management of sexual offence cases. It proposed the creation of a specialist court. The pre-recording of the testimony of complainers would become the norm. Trauma-informed practices and procedure would be used. This approach has the potential to improve the management of these cases and the experience of all those involved.

At the heart of our ambitions is the continued development of new technology to enhance the ability of all to access Scotland's courts and tribunals. A key focus will be on the completion of an end-to-end digital system for civil business. A new case management system for the Office of the Public Guardian will provide more user-friendly services.

Delivering the day-to-day business of the courts and tribunals, when pursuing an ambitious change agenda, will present real challenges over the next three years. Public finances continue to be constrained. Where funding is available, we have demonstrated that we can make lasting and beneficial improvements. The skills, dedication and compassion of our staff underpin all that we do. I commend them for their ongoing enthusiasm. By investing in them, and in the systems they use, we can continue to move deeper into the digital world. We will continue to work in collaboration with justice organisations, and the third sector, to address the new challenges, including work to respond to the threat posed by climate change.

It is a great honour and privilege to continue to serve as Chairman of the SCTS Board. The commitment, insight and expertise of my fellow Board members is greatly appreciated. With their support, and continued funding, I am confident that the objectives set out in this Corporate Plan will be realised.

Chief executive's introduction

Eric McQueen

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service has been privileged to play a leading role in significant reforms across Scotland's justice system over the past three years. This plan sets out our vision for the coming three years.

Over the period of our last corporate plan the justice system moved rapidly to accommodate remote and digital working in response to the pandemic. New approaches reduced the need for physical attendance – whilst ensuring it was maintained where it adds value. We invested heavily in online hearing and video conferencing technology and introduced the ability for Police and expert witnesses to give evidence remotely in High Court cases. As the dust hopefully settles on the pandemic we have a real opportunity to enhance new ways of working which improve the system for everyone.

While change and innovation enabled us to maintain services where possible, criminal case backlogs have accrued. In September 2021 we introduced a recovery programme. Since its introduction we have seen a 66% reduction in the number of additional scheduled trials that accrued during the pandemic. Our recovery programme will continue throughout this planning period, to ensure that cases can be concluded within time periods considered optimal.

As we plan for the coming three years, we must work within the constraints of a difficult economic and fiscal outlook. We anticipate that the scale of the challenge may grow – requiring us to deliver our services in the most efficient way. The importance of a well-functioning, independent courts and tribunals system cannot be overstated. We will continue to help shape and support Scottish Governments Vision for Justice and work in collaboration with all organisations across the justice system to implement transformational reform across criminal and civil justice.

The reform of Scotland's devolved Tribunals continues at pace. Significant growth is projected across a number of the chambers already within the First-tier structure and amongst those still to transfer. The Local Taxation Chamber was established in April 2023, accommodating Valuation Appeals Committees and the Council Tax Reduction Review Panel transferring in. The transfer of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland will also be a significant undertaking.

The Office of the Public Guardian has ambitious plans to put service users at the centre. A revised business model, supported by a new case management system, will deliver responsive, efficient and easily accessible services. This will allow faster processing of cases, and direct, user friendly access to information. An online public register will be launched that will allow 24/7 access to essential records, in a secure and compliant fashion.

As the range of services we administer has grown in recent years, the diversity of the organisation has changed too. The justice system must reflect the society that it serves – and for it to do so we must ensure that SCTS remains a great place for people from all walks of life to work. It is only by maintaining a skilled, engaged and diverse workforce that we can provide a high-quality, innovative and compassionate service – recognising that, behind every case, there are individuals with their own expectations and needs.

Our work to improve the service provided to the most vulnerable people in the system will continue – backed up by the development of a trauma-informed workforce, able to appropriately respond and support the wide range of people who find themselves involved in the system – often through no fault of their own.

Our values of respect, service and excellence guide all that we do. They ensure that we lead accountably, manage responsibly and innovate to improve our service. In so doing we continue to deliver our purpose – supporting justice.

About SCTS

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.

Our purpose and values

The purpose of SCTS is **supporting justice**. We fulfil that purpose by providing the people, buildings and services needed to support the judiciary, the courts, devolved tribunals and OPG. Our work focuses on improving access to justice, reducing delay and cost within the justice system, modernising our services in line with reform, and using leading technology to improve our services for everyone.

Our values

To help direct us towards achieving our purpose successfully, we observe three **key values: respect, service and excellence**. These guide our behaviour, decisions and actions - in pursuit of fulfilling our purpose to the highest standard.

By setting our priorities, underpinned by strong values which we promote in pursuit of our purpose and a fair justice system, we aim to provide the best possible service to those who use our services and interact with us on a daily basis.

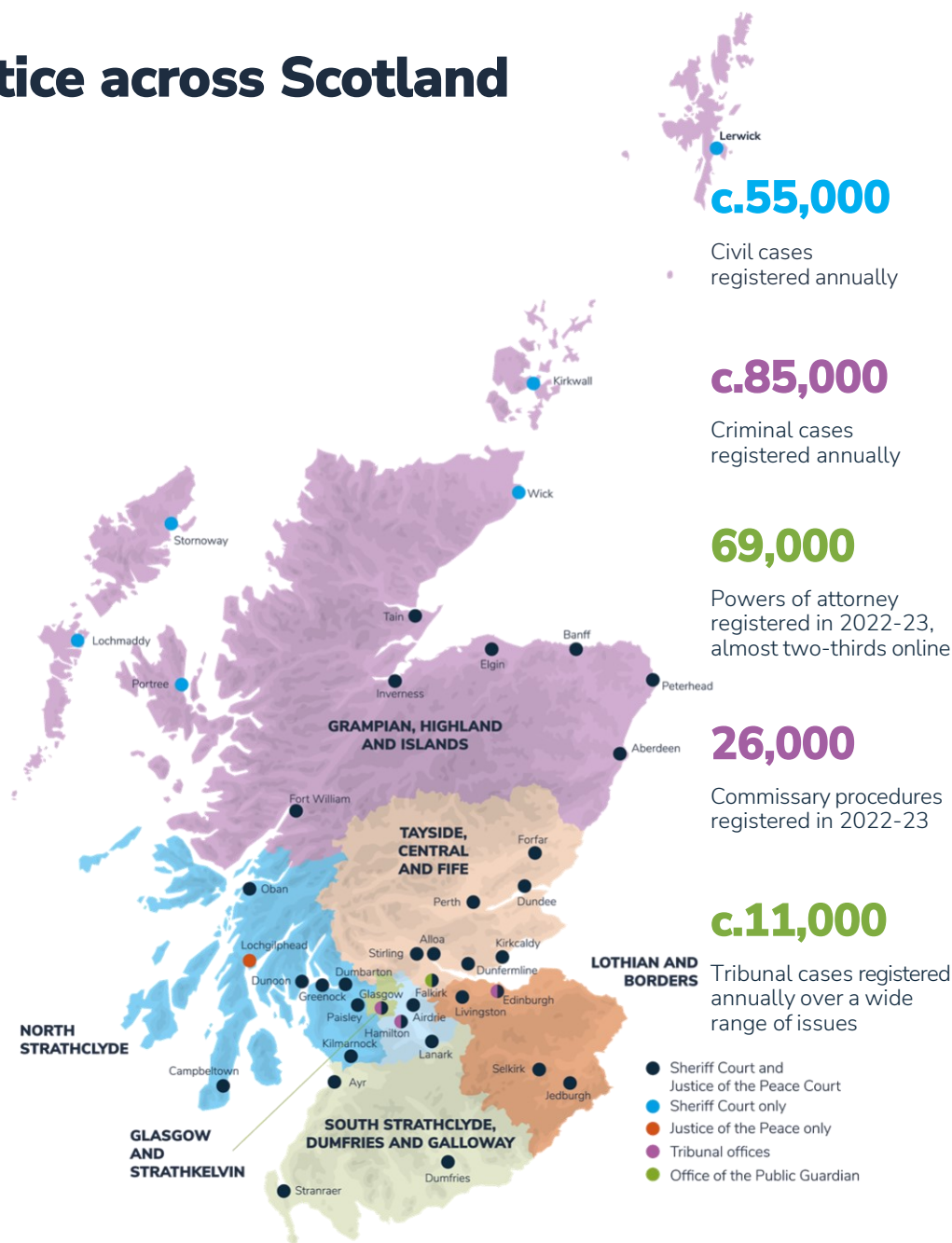
RESPECT	SERVICE	EXCELLENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be courteous• Be open and fair• Work as one team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver a professional service• Learn in all we do• Set an example	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovate• Collaborate• Be accountable

How we support justice across Scotland

The work of SCTS covers a broader range of issues than you may think. In providing support to Scotland's courts, devolved tribunals and the OPG, we touch the lives of many people on a daily basis – be that through formal court or tribunal business, fulfilling your civic duty as a juror, paying fees or fines, seeking help in managing the affairs of an incapable adult or dealing with the estate of a loved one who has passed away.

SCTS deals with over a quarter of a million cases and applications each year. Behind each one of these is an individual – looking to the system to help them assert their rights, address wrongs or provide support in a time of need. It is this work – which takes place every day in our courts, tribunals and administrative centres across Scotland – that consumes most of the time, energy and skill of our staff. We take pride in working as one team and providing high levels of service to all those who use the courts, tribunals and OPG.

We are always looking to improve the services we provide – through innovation and development. Whilst delivering our core services is our priority, considering how we can improve and develop is also crucial to keep delivering the highest quality service.



71 buildings

Across the length and breadth of Scotland

50%

Our reduction in CO2 emissions since 2010

60,000

Unique visits to the SCTS [website](#) each week

1,900 staff

Award winning carers and diversity policies

85%

Sheriff Court fines within collection rate

£209.3m (2023-24)

Total revenue and capital expenditure - over 84% invested in front line services and digital infrastructure

Our strategy

Strategic priorities and key reform areas

Our purpose of supporting justice is translated into seven [strategic priorities](#). These directly support the Vision for Justice in Scotland, and a range of the outcomes and indicators in Scotland's National Performance Framework, as shown in our strategy map overleaf.

Our first two priorities, **SP1 and SP2**, aim to ensure effective support to Scotland's courts' and tribunals' judiciary, whilst maintaining or improving levels of satisfaction amongst those who use Scotland's courts, tribunals and the OPG. Our service can only be said to be effective if these priorities are met.

Priorities **SP3-SP5** relate to the people, assets, systems and processes that we can develop, improve and invest in over the coming years to ensure our service remains effective, responsive and innovative.

Priorities **SP6 and SP7** are about how we do our work. We maintain a strong focus on using resources as effectively as possible and delivering on the best value themes set for all public bodies in Scotland.

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 – provides a common focus for all involved in the delivery of criminal and civil justice, and our work supports the delivery of its outcomes and goals (which are summarised at [Annex 2](#)).



Our objectives for the coming three years are organised under each of our four key reform areas, on pages [27-30](#). Each objective is aligned to strategic priorities.

By organising our objectives under the key reform areas, we are able to ensure a sound focus on realising our purpose of supporting justice. It also provides us with a degree of flexibility to respond to challenges, opportunities and innovations that may arise in specific areas.

Our strategy

Supporting Scotland

Our **strategy map** sets out our purpose, values and key behaviours that guide our priorities and work as we support Scotland’s justice system.

The values that sit at the core of Scotland’s National Performance Framework are that, 'We are a society which treats all our people with kindness, dignity and compassion, respects the rule of law, and acts in an open and transparent way". A well functioning courts and tribunals system is essential to maintaining those values.

Dignity and compassion can only be guaranteed if, when violated, there is access to independent redress, before an impartial panel, within a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost.

A society can only be said to respect the rule of law if it maintains effective institutions through which its laws can be independently interpreted and disputes resolved, within reasonable timescales.

The principle of open justice, accessible to all, underpins open and transparent government. Courts and tribunals ensure that citizens and the state have an agreed, binding, independent mechanism to resolve disputes – and to ensure that those who have done wrong are held to account.

Our seven **strategic priorities** help us organise the work we do in the most effective way. They also demonstrate how that work contributes to a significant number of the outcomes and goals set out in Scotland’s National Performance Framework.



Our structure

SCTS Board



Top row (left to right) Steven Dickson, Sheriff Jillian Martin-Brown, Eric McQueen, Rt. Hon. Lady Dorrian, Dr. Sophie Flemig, Margaret Craig, Sheriff Olga Pasportnikov

Bottom row (left to right) Rt. Hon. Lord Woolman, Sheriff Principal Aisha Anwar, Anne Scott, Rt. Hon. Lord Carloway (Chair), Ruth Innes KC, Lynsey Walker, Morna Rae JP

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service is an independent, judicially - led, public body, with the composition of the Board set in statute.

Chaired by the Lord President, Scotland's most senior judge, its membership is drawn from those holding judicial office, members with a legal background and independent members from outwith the justice system. You can find out more about each Board member on our website.

The Board sets the strategic direction of SCTS, makes the key decisions and monitors progress to ensure the delivery of strategic objectives. The Board is supported by four committees covering audit and risk; people; remuneration; and estates, health and safety, fire and security.

Each of the committees oversees major activities relevant to its area, providing specialist direction and guidance to ensure effective change management at a strategic level.

Our structure

The Executive Team

Day-to-day management responsibility for the staff and operation of SCTS is delegated to the Chief Executive, who is also a member of the Board. The Chief Executive is supported by six executive directors. Together they make up the Executive Team, who are responsible for operational and corporate delivery. The Judicial Office for Scotland is a separate office established within SCTS to provide support to the Lord President in fulfilling his responsibilities as the head of the Scottish Judiciary.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Eric McQueen

Human resources
Communications



CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

Alice Wallace

Finance and procurement
Property services



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Court Operations

David Fraser

Court operations
Education and learning
National fines



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JUDICIAL OFFICE

Kay McCorquodale

Judicial Office
Legal support
Strategy and education



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRIBUNALS and OPG

Tim Barraclough

Tribunals operations
OPG operations



DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Noel Rehfisch

Strategy and planning
Policy and legislation
Management information
Data protection
Freedom of information
Corporate governance



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Change and Digital Innovation

Mike Milligan

Digital services
Change and innovation

Trends, challenges and opportunities

Supporting justice 2023-26 and beyond

As we move into a new planning period, it is important to reflect on how the business facing Scotland's courts, devolved tribunals and the OPG has changed over the past three years, and to assess the key trends in society that may affect what we do and how we do it in the coming years.

Financial climate

As we move forward, we must work within the constraints of a difficult economic and fiscal outlook. We anticipate that the scale of the resource challenge is likely to grow during the period of this plan – requiring us both to innovate and deliver our services in the most efficient way. Whilst the challenge will be significant, we will continue to focus on supporting our people and developing more effective and efficient services to support justice.

Court business

The pandemic created unprecedented challenges across all of society. For SCTS, the most significant impact was on criminal cases despite our innovative use of technology such as the creation of remote jury centres, enabling trials with 15 person juries to resume in a safe and secure environment while the pandemic was ongoing.

While the High Court and Sheriff solemn courts recovered to full trial operating capacity by November 2020 and February 2021 respectively, a significant backlog of cases had accrued. A comprehensive recovery programme was launched in September 2021 in partnership with key agencies and partners across the justice sector. Supported by funding from the Scottish Government, four additional High Courts; two additional Sheriff solemn courts; and 10 additional Sheriff summary trial courts have been operating. The aim is to return outstanding case levels to an optimal position by March 2024 for summary business, March 2025 for High Court cases and March 2026 for Sheriff Court solemn business.

Significant inroads have been made as a result – since its introduction we have seen a 66% reduction in the number of additional scheduled trials that accrued during the pandemic.

There is also a trend of increased sexual offending. For these reasons we will transfer recovery capacity from the summary to the solemn courts over the period of this plan – and remain committed to reducing case numbers back to normal projected levels through this corporate plan period.

Civil court business continues to be effectively managed, and backlogs were avoided through the pandemic due to the innovative use of remote and digital hearings. A number of these changes are here to stay and are delivering real benefit for all court users. In the six months to November 2022 some 59% of civil hearings were conducted virtually – a sea change in the way in which business of this nature is conducted – providing time savings and convenience for those involved.

Trends, challenges and opportunities

Supporting justice 2023-26 and beyond

Tribunal business

The transfer of devolved tribunals into the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland has been a major undertaking since the enactment of the Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014. Further powers have also been devolved to Scotland, leading to the creation of new chambers, which have significantly increased the level of business being managed within the First-tier Tribunal and Upper Tribunal for Scotland. The remaining devolved tribunals will transfer into the chamber structure during this planning period.

Projected case volume indicate considerable ongoing growth in the business being dealt with in current devolved tribunals. The Scottish Government predict that appeals in the Social Security Chamber will rise from 122 in 2022-23 to over 12,000 in 2023-24.

Office of the Public Guardian

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) supports the protection and safeguarding of property and finances belonging to adults and children with incapacity living in Scotland. Case backlogs in relation to Powers of Attorney have arisen following the pandemic. The elimination of these will be an early priority in this period. In support of this work we will upgrade the systems used in OPG to provide improved access, efficiency and resilience.

Case volumes are expected to rise steadily over the planning period (a 19% rise in Power of Attorney (POA) applications is projected) as an increasing proportion of the population understand the benefits of having a POA in place. The public facing My POA [Campaign](#) helps citizens realise the benefits of prudent planning.

Meeting our users' needs

The justice system in Scotland moved rapidly to accommodate increased remote and digital working in response to the challenges the pandemic presented. The way in which our services are now provided improves accessibility for the public and the media, whilst affording round the clock services and information for all those who need it. This is a level of service that the public increasingly expect.

Over the period of our last plan we took a number of steps to reduce the need for physical attendance – whilst ensuring it was maintained where it adds value. For example, we introduced the ability for Police and expert witnesses to give evidence remotely in High Court cases, and invested in online hearing and video conferencing technology.

Over the period of this plan, we will continue to make more of our services available online – supporting the Lord President's vision that courts and tribunals should be seen as “a service, not just a place”. We will extend our civil digital case management system across all business types, developing a fully digital end to end service. This supports our ambition of moving towards a zero-emissions model of operations by 2045, in line with the Scottish Government's climate change ambitions.

We will also support significant policy developments across the justice system – such as work to implement the recommendations of the cross-justice Review Group, chaired by the Lord Justice Clerk, which made a range of recommendations to improve the management of sexual offence cases in Scotland. Our contribution to this will be significant – and is already under way through our work to increase the number of evidence by commission suites. These enable the most vulnerable to have their evidence pre-recorded, minimising further trauma and obtaining the best evidence early in proceedings.

Trends, challenges and opportunities

Supporting justice 2023-26 and beyond

A Diverse nation and organisation

As the range of services we administer has grown in recent years, the diversity of the organisation has changed too. The justice system must reflect the society that it serves – and for it to do so we must ensure that SCTS remains a great place for people from all walks of life to work. Our approach to workforce planning will continue to develop so that we can offer attractive careers – balancing flexibility, mobility and opportunities to develop.

SCTS is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity. An [Equality Advisory Group](#) (EAG), which includes external subject matter experts, was established in 2011. The EAG provides advice and guidance to the organisation on new and existing policies, procedures, providing fresh insight about developments in the equality sector. As per section 3 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, SCTS publishes a bi-annual Mainstreaming Equality [report](#), detailing the progress the organisation has made towards achieving its Equality Outcomes.

It is only by maintaining a skilled, engaged and diverse workforce that we can provide a high-quality, innovative and compassionate service – recognising that, behind every case, there are individuals with their own expectations and needs. Our work to improve the service provided to the most vulnerable people in the system will continue – backed up by the development of a trauma-informed workforce, able to appropriately respond and support the broad range of people who find themselves involved in the system – often through no fault of their own.

Scotland 2023 and beyond

The values that sit at the core of Scotland's National Performance Framework are that – ***'We are a society which treats all our people with kindness, dignity and compassion, respects the rule of law, and acts in an open and transparent way'***.

The justice system is fundamental to ensuring we live in safe, inclusive and thriving communities. It supports the rule of law and our democracy, and is a core part of our public services. Dignity and compassion can only be guaranteed if, when violated, there is an independent judiciary and a system which enables wrongdoing to be addressed and the rights of individuals to be upheld. Access to justice and the principle of open justice underpins open and transparent government. While the ability to fulfil our civic rights and respect for the rule of law remain an absolute constant, SCTS must transform to meet the needs of people in today's society. This includes ensuring we deliver person-centred services and embed trauma-informed practices.

Over the course of this plan SCTS will face a number of new opportunities and challenges – developing online service provision; tackling high outstanding case volumes; and implementing reform to improve the way the system manages serious sexual offence cases – all against a background of restricted funding. In this environment the importance of a well-functioning, independent justice system cannot be overstated. We will continue to work in collaboration with agencies and organisations across the system to maintain and improve standards and implement key reforms.

Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Criminal justice reform

Scotland's criminal courts enter this planning period with significant case backlogs to address, but with a range of innovations and judicially led reforms that have the potential to deliver real improvements – both in the performance of the system and the service it provides to those using it.

Case backlogs

Significant progress has already been made in addressing case backlogs (see *the commentary on page 12*). However the importance of reducing these to a more acceptable level cannot be overstated. Excessive delay is corrosive to effective functioning of the system – people's lives are put on hold, recollections of events can diminish and the risk of cases not proceeding or being delayed due to non-attendance increases. In addition to the pandemic, the level of new petitions registered (representing more serious criminal cases) is increasing – levels over the past 12 months are now 18% higher when compared to pre-pandemic averages.

Our top priority over this planning period is the continued delivery of the criminal court recovery programme. This will only be possible by working closely with all those involved – through the six local criminal justice boards, the Crown, the legal profession and the wide range of public and third-sector services providing valuable support to the courts. Critically, it will only be possible to maintain the additional capacity provided through the recovery programme if government funding is maintained to both SCTS and the other agencies involved. Returning the operation of the system to “business as usual” is a precursor to getting the most out of the other reforms on which we plan to focus.

Summary case management

A new initiative to improve the management of summary cases commenced in Dundee, Hamilton and Paisley Sheriff Courts in September 2022. The Summary Case Management (SCM) pilot seeks to reduce the number of unnecessary hearings, and will achieve this by facilitating early disclosure of evidence and providing early judicial case management.

Key evidence will be available to be released to the defence prior to or at the first calling in all domestic abuse cases (it is anticipated that the lessons learned may lead to the same approach being adopted in other types of summary sheriff court criminal business). Specified disclosure material can be requested where it is considered that such early disclosure may make a material difference to a plea or the early resolution of issues in non domestic abuse cases.

These pilots build on the Evidence and Procedure Review Pilots. The defence will no longer be required to lodge written records. These are replaced by a judicial case management note. Legal aid changes have been made to support the pilot.

In the 12 months to March 2022, there were over 36,000 not guilty pleas in summary sheriff court cases - representing over 70% of pleas entered. In the same period, only 5,503 complaints were called where evidence was led.

The automatic provision of key evidence in domestic abuse cases and 'specified disclosure' of material in other cases, will allow the defence to engage more meaningfully with the Crown on both plea and resolution at an early stage – or on the agreement of evidence where the case looks likely to proceed. It should lead to efficiencies for defence agents and for the Crown. For accused persons, there is the opportunity for matters to be resolved at the earliest possible stage in the process.

The pilots will run for 18 months with continual evaluation taking place. Over the course of this plan we intend to learn from these pilots and implement improvements where evidence indicates they will improve either the efficiency or effectiveness of the system – whilst supporting the administration of justice.

Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Improving the experience for victims and witnesses

The reforms to our criminal court processes outlined in this plan have, at their heart, a focus on the needs of victims and witnesses, while ensuring that the rights of the accused are protected at all times. The most significant developments in support for victims and witnesses over the coming period will develop from the recommendations of the Lord Justice Clerk's review of sexual offences. The creation of a specialist court for sexual offence cases is proposed. The pre-recording of the testimony of complainers would become the norm. Trauma-informed practices and procedure would be used. This approach has the potential to improve the management of these cases and the experience of all those involved.

Delays in the system can have a profoundly negative impact on victims, witnesses and the accused. This has been recognised across the justice system, which is why our top priority is to reduce outstanding criminal case levels. Since the introduction of the recovery programme we have seen a 66% reduction in the number of additional scheduled trials that accrued during the pandemic – its work will continue over the period of this plan. As well as reducing the number of cases, there can be real benefit in minimising the number of hearings - especially unnecessary hearings where parties do not attend or little substantive progress is made. The work of the Summary Case Management Pilot, while at an early stage, is showing the potential to make changes that will allow a greater proportion of cases to be resolved at an earlier stage in the process, minimising trauma and inconvenience for all involved.

The pandemic necessitated that we innovate and adapt our services to ensure essential business could continue. In learning from that experience we will continue to use technology to deliver and improve our services. Exploring the possibility of deploying a virtual Domestic Abuse court model present one such opportunity, creating the potential for the early fixing of trial dates, greater use of trauma informed practices and a more focussed use of scarce resources including community justice services and specialist interventions, such as the Caledonian programme. A virtual domestic abuse court model would allow the complainer to be fully involved in the case, but with greater access to support and without the risk of any inadvertent contact with the accused.

Management of sexual offences

Major changes in both policy and practice across the criminal justice system will take place over this planning period, through the implementation of the Lord Justice Clerk's Review: [Improving the Management of Sexual Offence Cases](#).

The Scottish Government have established a Governance Group, bringing partners from across the together - to champion shared ownership of, and consider approaches to, implementing the recommendations of the review. A working group was specifically established to consider the creation of a national specialist court for serious sexual offences. That working group published its [report](#) in November 2022 – calling for legislation to allow such a court to be established.

Where legislation is not necessary, SCTS has been making substantial progress, notably in the creation of facilities to support the pre-recording of evidence from children and vulnerable witnesses (a new Evidence by Commission suite was opened in Edinburgh in October 2022). Similar facilities are already available in Glasgow and Inverness. Full time judicial resources have been committed to enable these facilities to run at full capacity as part of an effort to reduce potential trauma to witnesses in the trial process. SCTS is looking to develop further facilities in other locations across Scotland.

The adoption of trauma-informed practices is a key step in improving the experience of complainers. There is a sound basis for recommending the development of such practices, particularly within a specialist court dealing with more serious sexual offence cases. A Trauma Informed Justice Skills and Knowledge Framework was formally approved by the Victims Taskforce in December 2022 with a national launch date set for the spring of 2023. SCTS is now developing a Leaders' Programme and roll-out for staff is planned during 2023.

Criminal justice reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Virtual domestic abuse court model

The arrival of the pandemic led to a pilot project for the delivery of virtual summary criminal trials. The first virtual criminal trial was held in Inverness in June 2020 - the first of its kind in the UK, followed by two more in Aberdeen. The cases being dealt with virtually were selected to be straightforward in nature and the process worked well. The Sheriff Principal of Grampian, Highland and Islands issued an [interim report](#) on their operation, recommending increased use of virtual trials to deal with appropriate summary criminal cases.

Following that report, the Virtual Trials National Project Board was established to enable all interested groups to be involved in developing the concept. The Board concluded that the virtual model would best suit domestic abuse cases, and that virtual trials should become the default for those cases.

Over the course of this planning period, we will develop a virtual domestic abuse court model, introducing trauma informed practices and procedures, in line with the recommendations in the Lord Justice Clerk's Management Review (see p16), and with procedures that allow for the early fixing of trial diets. This will enable focussed use of community justice resources, with benefits for both complainers and the accused (particularly those subject to stringent bail conditions). This focused approach will also allow best use of scarce community justice resources and the deployment of a problem solving approach through the use of structured deferred sentences.

Virtual custodies

Virtual custody cases were an innovation born of necessity during COVID in order to keep people safe by avoiding the movement of accused persons in custody, particularly where there was an infection risk. The concept has been proven in pilots in Falkirk and north Strathclyde, where the physical court has been replicated in a digital environment (as of November 2022, approximately 18,000 virtual custody hearings had taken place since 2020).

Over the course of this plan we intend to develop an efficient dedicated virtual custody system across Scotland which places increased focus on the needs of the accused, minimises the need for transportation to - and physical appearance at - court and provides vulnerable accused with better support services. The model also has the potential to significantly reduce the number of transfers from custody units and prisons to court - increasing efficiency for partners and the sustainability of the system as a whole.



Criminal justice reform

Click on the icon to view the Criminal reform objectives, 2023-36

Civil justice reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Civil justice reform

Over the past three year planning period, we have utilised technology to support civil business. The electronic submission of case papers and the use of virtual hearings, via the WebEx platform, are now common features in our system (59% of all civil hearings were conducted virtually in the period May to November 2022). The use of technology has ensured that, across civil business, backlogs have not arisen.

Our Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) continues to develop, enabling online case management and administration through the Civil Online portal. Full digital case management and processing is now in place for simple procedure cases and an increasingly broad range of business can now be conducted online - with the submission of bulky paper case files largely now a thing of the past. All case types in the Court of Session are now fully integrated enabling all new cases to be registered in ICMS.

This significant progress had been accelerated in response to COVID-19. Many of the innovations introduced will remain in place, as we adapt to a model where civil business is processed using the optimal balance of virtual and traditional processes - supported by effective digital case management platforms and high quality virtual hearing options.

Meeting the needs of service users

Our ambition over the period of this plan is to complete the transformation of the way in which we manage civil business - developing a fully digital end-to-end service, backed up by a modern, resilient and easy to use system. Building on our current capacity the system will be developed in order to:

- provide a single case management system for all civil business;
- provide a fully digital case file for all cases in the Court of Session;
- provide an end to end digital service for the majority of civil business in the sheriff courts;
- enable the initiation of all ordinary actions online;
- enable case documentation and hearing dates to be viewed online;
- provide automatic notifications when new documents are available to view - both court generated and those lodged by other parties;
- provide a digital registration service to allow approximately 48,000 case registrations per annum (which accounts for the majority of all civil business in the sheriff court);
- ensure 24/7 service provision to increase access to justice; and
- provide court users with a sustainable, consistent and reliable standard of service.

There are a range of benefits that will be realised from the transformation of the way in which we manage civil business, from 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; 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 systems – 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. Virtual courts and online services will increasingly come to be regarded as core components of the justice system.

Civil justice reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Assisted digital support

In order to fully embed digital services, practical help and support will be required to assist people who may find it challenging to access or use them. Access to the appropriate equipment and services must be combined with access to the skills and knowledge required to use new services.

As we develop new digital services we will ensure they 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.

Adapting our services as the law develops

Each year the Scottish Government publishes its Programme for Government, detailing the legislation it will take forward 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 works to support the changes made by Government and the SCJC – as processes become increasingly digital this can require quite significant development to - and investment in - systems to ensure they provide the services required. Our aim will be to keep our systems up to speed with all legislative change – recognising that the resources available to deliver reform are limited and will need to be carefully balanced between development and compliance activity.

Increasing transparency

We continue to strive to improve access to, and the transparency of, the courts. The advent of new technology means that we can open up the courts to a wider audience – without the need for physical attendance. In November 2021, an appeal hearing in the Court of Session was live-streamed for the first time, attracting viewers from across the globe. Further live streaming has followed. Lord Pentland, Senator of the College of Justice, is heading a task force with the aim of developing permanent arrangements for the streaming of cases where there is likely to be an interest for such access - commencing with the Appellate Divisions. Live streaming will not be appropriate for all hearings. A decision will be made based on the circumstances of the particular case.



Civil justice reform

Click on the icon to view the Civil reform objectives, 2023-26

Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Tribunals reform

The **Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014** established the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland and the Upper Tribunal for Scotland, to create a cohesive structure of governance and operation for Scotland's devolved tribunals. Each year, its work touches the lives of tens of thousands of citizens, providing essential, accountable justice over a wide range of fields, drawing on the expert knowledge of professionals whose experience underpins the specialist, unique forum of each tribunal.

The vast majority of structural changes transferring devolved tribunals into the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland were completed over the last three years, despite the inherent challenges recent years posed. In the face of these and increasing case volumes, tribunals maintained operations at pre-pandemic levels with minimal backlogs. This was largely due to the informal approach to tribunal hearings, which lend themselves to greater flexibility and resilience in adapting to a hybrid-hearing model - over 90% of cases in the Health and Education Chamber were conducted by tele-conference or video hearing during the pandemic. Case volumes have continued growing year-on-year and will maintain that trajectory over this period, as service users recognise the value in the specialism that the tribunal forum offers.

The transfer of the devolved tribunals will continue over the period of this plan, in parallel with expansion and embedding of new ways of working, including multi-jurisdictional approaches, with the following key areas of focus during the period of this plan:

- Completion of the transfer of remaining devolved tribunals;
- Realising the benefits of digitisation and enhancing the quality of provision of access to justice across tribunals;
- Managing and resourcing continued growth in business and staff, and potential transfer of new tribunals' jurisdictions.

Reform in the Office of the Public Guardian

The OPG is an evolving operation, putting service users at the centre, to design a service that is accessible for all. Its role is to provide protection for vulnerable people and their families through the power of attorney (POA) and guardianship systems.

Work to transform the services provided by OPG and the Accountant of Court (AoC) is under way. A new, forward-looking business model based on delivering responsive, efficient and easily accessible services has been developed. This transformation will be supported by a new case management system, which will allow faster processing of cases, and more user friendly access to services via a secure and efficient digital system. An online public register will be launched that will allow 24/7 access to essential records, in a secure and compliant fashion. This work has the potential to improve services significantly and deliver efficiencies in the longer-term.

Potential reforms to the Adults with Incapacity Act (Scotland) 2000 and Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) act 2003 may be features of this reform period, which have the capacity to vary the statutory function of the OPG. We will continue to work closely with agencies across the system to ensure the opportunities created by reform benefit the most vulnerable adults and children in our society.

Further amendment to the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 is expected. This will implement changes in respect of the management of funds owed to or belonging to children in Scotland, currently supervised and/or managed by the Accountant of Court's Office within OPG.

Tribunals and Office of the Public Guardian reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

A tribunals system for everyone

The Tribunals reform vision is to provide high-quality access to justice, judicially led, that is fair, efficient, user-friendly and responsive. Technology affords us the opportunity to provide faster, more convenient services that improve access to justice. The opportunities for progress here were evident from the pandemic, which showed that the dissemination of decisions fairly arrived at is achievable where parties' representatives and the decision-maker are in different places. Over the next planning period we will build on the progress made.

Digitisation by itself is not a remedy. Rather, it enables greater choice over the most appropriate mode of hearing for individual cases to suit applicants, of whom many are party litigants. Over the course of the planning period, we will embed a hearings strategy that standardises the use of in-person, remote (teleconference and video) and hybrid hearings. Maintaining the specialist nature of each tribunal is crucial. Adopting a multi-jurisdictional approach to hearing and case management solutions, will improve processes, efficiency and security. In turn, this helps build stronger partnerships across the tribunals system.

The expected, significant increase in business volumes and transfer of the remaining chambers that will be the realisation of much of the Tribunals Scotland Act 2014 intentions, presents opportunities to continue innovating where opportunities arise, but also challenges in ensuring the right funding, resources, and people with the right skills are available to support justice in the unique environment that Tribunals offer.

Working together to manage change

Continued good progress across Tribunals reform requires working closely with the Scottish Government to manage projected growth across those chambers already transferred into the First-tier structure, and those still to transfer, to ensure funding and resources are available to manage the business effectively.

The ongoing expansion of the Social Security Chamber will see case volume increase, including those arising from the new Scottish Carer's Assistance - replacing the Carer's Allowance which will be administered by Social Security Scotland. From April 2023, the Local Taxation Chamber commenced, with Valuation Appeals Committees and the Council Tax Reduction Review Panel transferring in. The transfer of the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland into the Mental Health Chamber will also be a significant undertaking within this period.

Putting service users and judiciary at the centre of design and feedback on systems and processes will also be crucial to running well-managed and efficient tribunals. New systems must deliver improvement while continuing to recognise the unique character of each tribunal.

Proposals to transfer responsibility for the administration of reserved tribunals' business in Scotland (including immigration, employment and UK Tax and Social Security tribunals) were made in the Smith Commission report in 2014. The Scotland Act 2016 included provisions enabling such a transfer. To date, agreement on whether and when such a transfer will take place is yet to be reached between the Scottish and UK Governments. Successful implementation would be a significant undertaking, requiring several years to deliver. It would require significant resourcing to ensure effective integration into the Scottish structure – including arrangements to ensure the jurisdictions continued to be supported by skilled and experienced members of the tribunals' judiciary. We have shared these observations with colleagues in both the Scottish and UK Governments, and will maintain close dialogue with them in this area – to support effective administration and high quality services throughout any transition.



Tribunals and OPG reform

[Click to view the Tribunals and OPG reform objectives, 2023-26](#)

Corporate reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Our people

Our people are fully committed to supporting the judiciary and providing a first class service to the public. They are “public servants” in the truest sense of the phrase, delivering a front line service, supporting vulnerable and diverse users who often find themselves in a difficult, unfamiliar and anxious situation as they seek the services of the court or tribunal.

The wellbeing of our staff is paramount. We are committed to providing a healthy working environment and improving the quality of working lives for all our employees. Our Wellbeing initiative supports our core values of respect, service and excellence – recognising that our people are our greatest asset.

As an organisation SCTS promotes collaboration and values its diverse workforce. We encourage and support personal growth and work/life balance. We embrace the different perspectives of our people and offer the skills, experience and support for them to succeed in their current roles, whilst developing for the future.

As we look to the future, strong succession planning, aligned with tailored leadership programmes, will help ensure we develop future leaders who can succeed in an ever changing system. In response to that change blended learning approaches – combining online and in-person training – will ensure that we maintain the skills required to administer an increasingly complex system with the balance of openness, expertise and compassion for which our people are known. A range of flexible work patterns, supported by our hybrid working policy, will help to develop a more flexible and adaptive workforce.

Improvements to our people systems will improve our ability to plan and free up more time to deliver a first-class service.

Responding to the climate challenge

Over the past decade SCTS has had a strong track record on carbon reduction. CO₂ emissions have more than halved since the organisation became a non-ministerial office in 2010. 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).

Good practice in sustainability has been adopted across a number of areas including physical improvements to the built estate, the installation of photovoltaic arrays, embracing remote working, investing in electric vehicles/charging infrastructure and embedding electronic payment systems across the business. The organisation is fully committed to the net zero agenda and the Board has committed to the 2045 target set by the Scottish Government. As an organisation that is obliged to deliver its business in a range of locations across Scotland, often from historic and listed buildings, the challenge of making sustained progress towards this target is significant.

In recognition of this fact the Board of SCTS has commissioned a revised sustainability strategy and associated action plans that will be developed during 2023 – guiding the organisation on its journey to achieving the net zero challenge. A Board level champion has been appointed to support this work and a new oversight group will be established to ensure clear leadership and regular review of progress.

Corporate reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Our data

As an organisation SCTS recognises the value of information and the importance of strong information governance and controls. Our approach to information governance over the next three years will deliver improvements to our information management practices – as set out in the [SCTS Records Management Plan](#). We will develop an Information Governance Strategy; undertaking a review of our information management practises and implementing SharePoint as our electronic document management solution. We will continue to invest in the professional development of our Information Governance team, recognising the need for expert advice and support in this field – as the range and sensitivity of data managed by the organisation on a daily basis continues to grow.

Our systems and infrastructure

Digital innovation is changing the way in which we work, where we work, how we organise our work, the products we use and how we communicate. Changes to the way we deliver our business allow us to rationalise, innovate and improve our services. Those using our services are willing and eager to interact with us in new ways – and expect us to change the way in which we deliver services – improving accessibility, efficiency and choice.

Over the course of the coming corporate plan we will continue on that digital journey. We will move to a fully cloud-based operating platform for our digital systems. We will upgrade our core finance and people systems – automating recurring tasks, improving intelligence and compliance. We will also invest in a range of externally facing digital systems – our Civil Online case management portal, our core website and wider web estate and our digital expenses payment system. All these investments will help us move towards our long-term ambition – that SCTS should become a cash-free, paper-free, net-zero organisation.

Corporate reform

Key reform areas 2023-26

Listening, learning and working together

As we continue to administer Scotland's Courts, devolved tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian we will keep our focus on those we serve and those we work with. The justice system operates at its best when the agencies it comprises of communicate, collaborate and innovate together.

When we work across the system we aim at all times to be competent, confident and influential. We will use data and analytics to inform our approaches and – when we invest in change or new initiatives – we will evaluate and review what we have done to ensure it leads to improvements, drawing on independent analysis and reviews where appropriate.

The greatest source of insight available to us comes from those who use our services. To understand and improve we will continue to seek their feedback and insights. We will maintain and develop our extensive user surveys and continue to benchmark our service against the independently assessed Customer Service Excellence standard. By so doing we can be confident that, over the period of this plan we will continue to improve the service that we provide in pursuit of our purpose – supporting justice.

Financial uncertainty

While budgets have been tight over the past decade, SCTS has identified and delivered efficiencies enabling the delivery of a range of ambitious justice reforms. Significant further reforms are planned which will deliver lasting improvements across the justice system, should it prove possible to maintain investment in the coming years.

SCTS is developing a medium term financial strategy, which will align with the recently announced Scottish Government transformation programme to create sustainable and impactful public services. This programme recognises the immense pressures faced by public services during the pandemic, the impact of emergency budget reviews and the prospect of increasing resource challenges from 2025-26 onwards.

By delivering the improvements set out in this plan SCTS will be able to provide a better service, whilst achieving efficiencies of benefit of the justice system. The importance of maintaining core investment in SCTS cannot be overstated – our courts and tribunals are not just public services – they are a core part of a progressive and fair democracy – providing the forum in which justice is done and through which citizens, institutions and the state can assert their rights and resolve disputes.



Corporate reform

Click on the icon to view the
Corporate reform objectives, 2023-26

Strategic objectives and key reform areas

2023-26

How we plan and organise our activities

Pages 26-30 set out the strategic objectives to which SCTS is committed over the course of this planning period, which will keep us focussed on our purpose - supporting justice. These are organised under our key areas of reform - Criminal, Civil, Tribunals and OPG and Corporate.

These activities are aligned to our seven **strategic priorities, which are described overleaf**. 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 Board - assuring that how we organise our work is effective, and makes best use of public funds.



Working in collaboration

Scotland's justice system continually develops in response to wider changes in society. As policy develops, and new legislation influences our operating environment, strong partnerships across the justice system are essential if new policies are to be effective.

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 provides a common focus for all involved in the delivery of criminal and civil justice, and our work supports the delivery of its outcomes and goals (which are summarised at [Annex 2](#)).

Our vision for reform

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 inspiring user-centred change to create more efficient and accessible services for all

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

Strategic priorities 2023-26

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 Sustainable buildings and business

We provide a high-quality, safe and secure environment for Scotland's courts and tribunals, and take further action to reduce our environmental impact without compromising our core services

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



Criminal justice reform

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

- SP1: Well supported judiciary
- SP2: Satisfied service users
- SP3: Skilled and motivated people
- SP4: Sustainable buildings and business
- SP5: Digital services
- SP6: Efficiency and best value
- SP7: Purposeful collaboration

Objectives	Aligned strategic priority	We will know we are making progress by
<p>1 We will reduce criminal case backlogs and waiting times by delivering additional court capacity to support recovery and address unacceptable periods of delay</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP7</p>	<p>Monitoring impact on waiting times and outstanding case levels, in line with published targets</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP7</p>	<p>A reduction in the proportion of summary cases set down for trial as evidenced in published management information reports</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP2 SP3 SP7</p>	<p>Establishing a specialist sexual offences court with staff trained in trauma informed practices and procedure</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP2 SP4 SP5</p>	<p>An increase in the level of witnesses giving evidence by commission throughout the period of this plan</p>
<p>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 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</p>	<p>SP2 SP5 SP6 SP7</p>	<p>A virtual domestic abuse court model has been implemented; virtual custody hearings are operational across Scotland; remote evidence by Police and expert witnesses becomes the default position - subject to particular case requirements</p>



Civil justice reform

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

- SP1: Well supported judiciary
- SP2: Satisfied service users
- SP3: Skilled and motivated people
- SP4: Sustainable buildings and business
- SP5: Digital services
- SP6: Efficiency and best value
- SP7: Purposeful collaboration

Objectives	Aligned strategic priority	We will know we are making progress by
<p>1 We will transform our civil justice system, 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</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP4 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Measuring the growing proportion of business being submitted and managed online across the Court of Session and sheriff court civil business</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP3 SP4 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Monitoring civil business case waiting times against targets; aligning the development of new digital systems with Digital Scotland Service Standards, to ensure they work for everyone who needs to use them</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP2 SP3 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Enabling key civil cases to be accessible by a world-wide audience, improving understanding and transparency</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP3 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Successful integration of law and rule changes during the planning period, enabling users to benefit from new processes - supported by user friendly guidance</p>



Tribunals and OPG justice 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

- SP1: Well supported judiciary
- SP2: Satisfied service users
- SP3: Skilled and motivated people
- SP4: Sustainable buildings and business
- SP5: Digital services
- SP6: Efficiency and best value
- SP7: Purposeful collaboration

Objectives	Aligned strategic priority	We will know we are making progress by
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP6 SP7</p>	<p>A reduction in end-to-end timescales for proceedings while managing increased case volumes; carrying out regular Skills Audit to track personal development of staff; Conducting user satisfaction surveys</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP3 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Agreeing a hearings strategy with Chamber Presidents; surveying tribunal members' satisfaction to ensure business is conducted effectively and securely</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP2 SP3 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Monitoring progress on case backlogs, in line with internal targets; meeting agreed timelines for the processing of Power of Attorney applications</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP6 SP7</p>	<p>A reduction in the number of orders sought from sheriffs under the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000; a reduction in complaints received following investigations</p>



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

- SP1: Well supported judiciary
- SP2: Satisfied service users
- SP3: Skilled and motivated people
- SP4: Sustainable buildings and business
- SP5: Digital services
- SP6: Efficiency and best value
- SP7: Purposeful collaboration

Objectives	Aligned strategic priority	We will know we are making progress by
<p>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</p>	<p>SP2 SP3 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Reducing the level of data input to key systems; developing enhanced reports to improve analysis</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP1 SP2 SP3</p>	<p>Analysis of annual SCTS People Survey data relating to learning, wellbeing, engagement and stress - to ensure that new systems and programmes impact positively</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP2 SP4 SP5 SP6</p>	<p>Launch of a new web site presence that is user-centred and provides easy-to-use automated services that increase and improve on the range of services available to users</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>SP4 SP5 SP6 SP7</p>	<p>Launch of a new sustainability plan, coupled with monitoring of carbon levels and reduction activities</p>

Monitoring progress and performance

This plan sets out our strategic priorities and objectives over the three-year period from 2023-26. It will be supported by corporate strategies setting out our longer-term direction on Estates, Finance, People and Digital development.

Overall responsibility for the delivery of this plan rests with the SCTS Board, which meets at least six times per year. Support is provided by formal Board Committees, including the People Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and the Estates, Health and Safety, Fire and Security Committee.

Performance management

Delivery of specific actions and detailed monitoring of performance are the responsibility of the Chief Executive, supported by the Executive Team. Collaborative justice-wide initiatives will be managed, and progress will be monitored, through the Scottish Government's Justice Board.

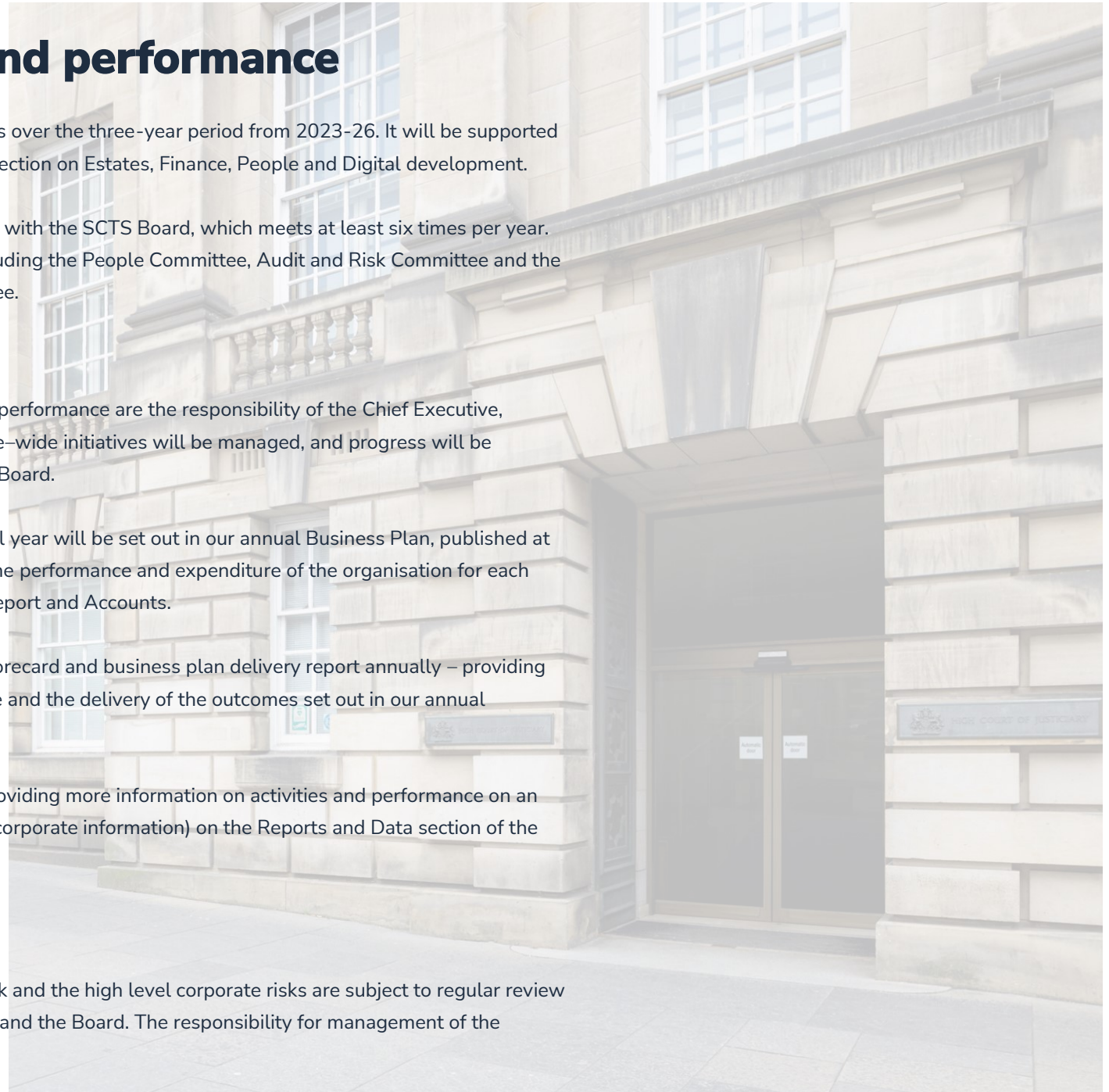
More detailed performance outcomes for each financial year will be set out in our annual Business Plan, published at the beginning of each business year. A full report on the performance and expenditure of the organisation for each financial year is published in the form of our Annual Report and Accounts.

In addition the Board also publishes a performance scorecard and business plan delivery report annually – providing an overview of key aspects of operational performance and the delivery of the outcomes set out in our annual business plan respectively.

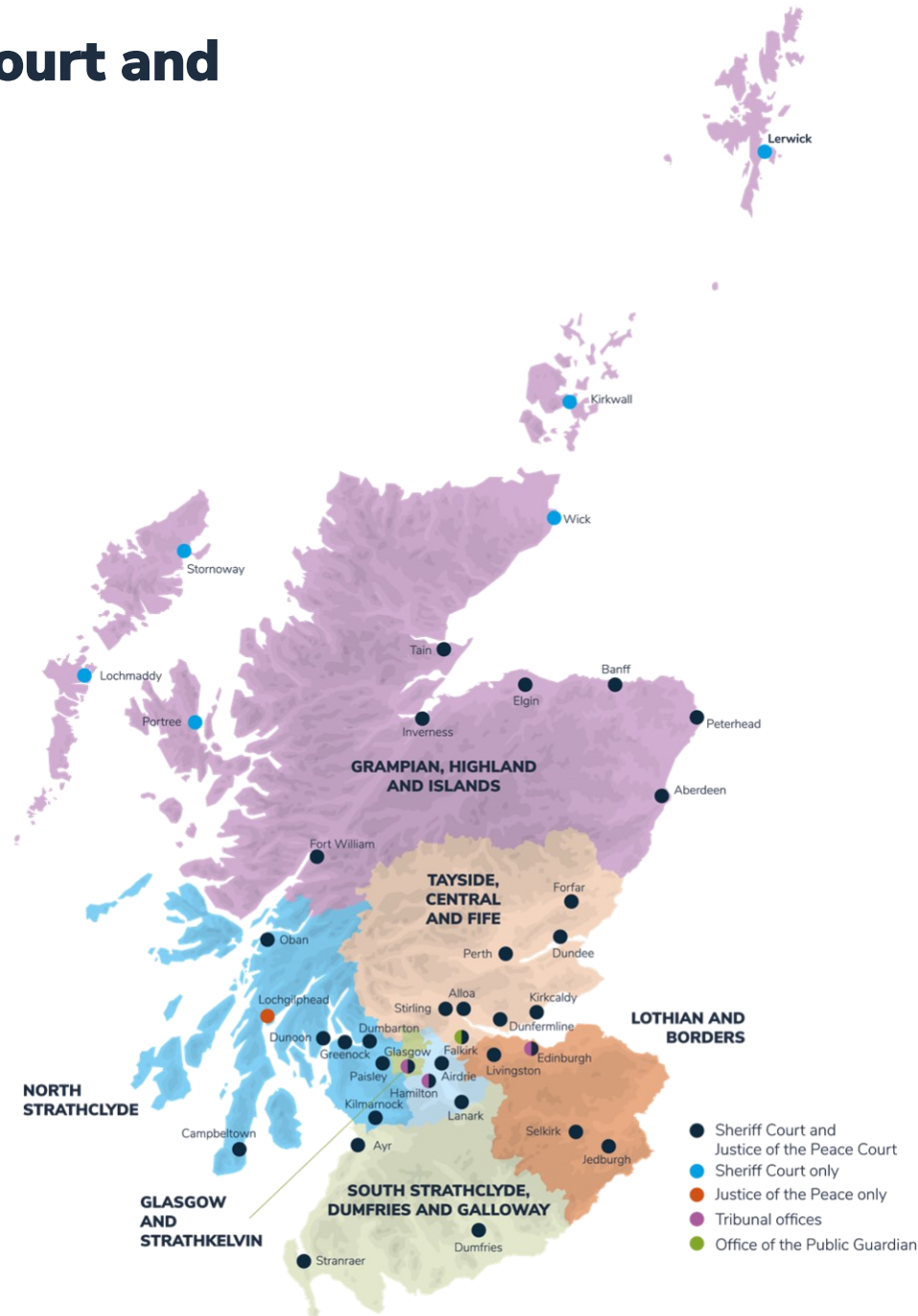
These documents complement this Corporate Plan, providing more information on activities and performance on an annual basis. They can be found (alongside other key corporate information) on the Reports and Data section of the SCTS website.

Risk management

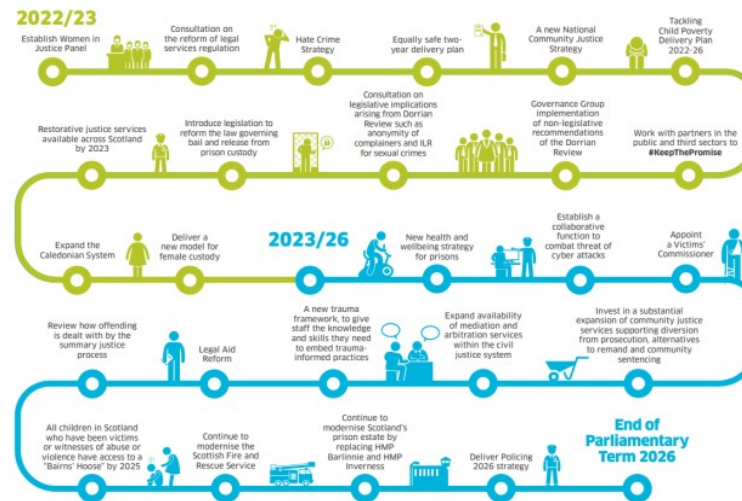
SCTS maintains a formal Risk Management Framework and the high level corporate risks are subject to regular review by the Executive Team, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board. The responsibility for management of the individual risks is delegated to specific risk owners.



Annex 1 - SCTS court and tribunal locations



Annex 2 - The Vision for Justice in Scotland



Further information

SCTS website

www.scotcourts.gov.uk

Judiciary of Scotland

www.judiciary.scot

SCTS statistics, plans, 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

Other courts and tribunals

www.scotcourts.gov.uk/the-courts/the-tribunals/other-courts-and-tribunals

Judicial Office for Scotland

www.judiciary.scot/

Scottish Government

www.gov.scot/

Scottish Civil Justice Council

www.scottishciviljusticecouncil.gov.uk

Scottish Sentencing Council

www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk/

Vision for Justice in Scotland

www.gov.scot/publications/vision-justice-scotland/

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

Tel: 0131 444 3300

Fax: 0131 443 2610

enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk

 Follow @SCTScourtstrib

This is principally a digital publication. If you require a paper copy or production of this document in another language or format, including plain text, please contact us at: enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk