



ORGANISATION/SERVICE ASSESSED

SCOTTISH COURTS AND TRIBUNALS SERVICE

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (referred to as SCTS throughout the report) administers the Supreme Courts (the Court of Session, and the High Court of Justiciary), the Appeal Courts (the Sheriff Appeal Courts – Civil and Criminal and the High Court of Appeal), and the Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Courts. SCTS is also responsible for the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), Accountant of Court and the Scottish Tribunals.

The purpose of SCTS is to support justice by providing the people, buildings and services needed to support the judiciary, the courts, devolved tribunals, and the OPG. It deals with over a quarter of a million cases and applications each year, touching the lives of many people daily - be that through formal court or tribunal business, fulfilling a 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 has an estate comprising 71 buildings across Scotland, including courts, vulnerable witness suites, tribunals, and offices. It operates from 51 distinct locations, covering Scotland's six sheriffdoms, and has a further 13 remote video witness suites. Tribunals also use 70 additional venues to accommodate hearings.

Cases are brought to the Criminal or Civil courts in Scotland, as well as Tribunals that have the authority to determine specific types of disputes. Criminal Courts are used when it is suspected that a crime has been committed; the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) will bring a prosecution to Court. Cases are heard at a Justice of the Peace Court, Sheriff Court or High Court, depending on the severity of the crime. The maximum penalty each Court can hand down is set by law.

Civil cases can be brought by individuals or organisations against other individuals or organisations. These are instigated to rectify what they believe is an unfair situation. Cases can be heard in the Sheriff Court or in the Court of Session. Examples include family issues such as divorce, personal injury claims, breaches of contract, and the review of decisions made by local or central Government.

Tribunals hear specific cases which cover issues devolved to Scotland, such as mental health and land. They also hear cases on areas such as pension appeals, additional support needs for children, housing, taxation, social security, and health. Cases that are not heard in Scottish Tribunals include immigration and asylum, social entitlement, and employment, as these are dealt with by the UK HM (His Majesty) Courts and Tribunal Service.

In addition to Criminal and Civil Courts and Tribunals, SCTS is also responsible for the OPG, Scottish Land Court and Lands Tribunal for Scotland. The OPG supports adults with incapacity. This includes maintaining a register of powers of attorney and supervising those appointed to manage the financial affairs of individuals who are unable to manage them themselves. It also investigates circumstances where property or finances relating to an incapable adult appear to be at risk. The Scottish Land Court covers farming, dealing with agriculture and crofting, and handles disputes between landlords and tenants. The Lands Tribunal for Scotland has statutory power to deal with various types of disputes involving land or property and works in much the same way as an ordinary Civil Court.

Customers (referred to as service users throughout the report) are varied; some common examples include the Crown Office and Fiscal Services, the Police, Social Workers, Solicitors, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, and individuals such as Accused persons, Witnesses, Victims, Jury members, and supporters of those attending court and tribunal proceedings.

2. METHODOLOGY

SCTS was recertificated with the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Standard in 2024. However, in 2025, it re-procured the service, which Assessment Services Ltd successfully gained. The procurement process included a schedule of activities to be undertaken throughout the first year, as outlined in the Rolling Review (RR1).

The SCTS CSE Lead, Assessment Services Systems and Finance Manager and the assigned Lead Assessor collaborated on the approach to complete the RR1. A corporate self-assessment was completed by the CSE Lead on the Assessment Services Online Self-Assessment Tool, whereby a narrative was provided for the 22 elements of the CSE Standard being assessed to demonstrate how the Organisation met the requirements. In addition, several pieces of evidence were provided to put the narrative into context. The Lead Assessor reviewed the self-assessment, recording findings/ additional questions, which were then shared with the SCTS CSE Lead. A further meeting was held to enable the Lead Assessor to gain clarification on the strategies, systems, and processes adopted at a Corporate level.

Throughout this RR1, a total of 16 sites/ units (referred to as locations throughout the report) were assessed, either remotely via Microsoft Teams or in person. These included:

Remote Assessment

Greenock Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Forfar Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Lanark Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Elgin Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Dumbarton Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Tain Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Wick Sheriff Court,
Campbeltown Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Legislation Information Unit (LIU),
Property Services Unit (PSU).

In-Person Visit

Parliament House and Lawnmarket, including the Scottish Land Court and Lands Tribunal for Scotland
Edinburgh Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court (ES&JoPC),
Edinburgh Tribunals,
Inverness Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Dunfermline Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court,
Kirkcaldy Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court.

Each location completed a self-assessment explaining how it met the 22 elements being assessed throughout the RR1. The assigned Assessor reviewed these, and the findings were shared with the relevant contact in preparation for the remote or in-person visit.

The assessment took place between September 8th and 18th, 2025. The team of five Assessors completed interviews with staff (senior leaders, managers, and frontline staff), partners, and service users. A total of 113 staff, 18 partners, nine service users, and a further 25 who fall into the category of both a service user and partner. Each Assessor recorded the key findings against the 22 elements, areas of strength, and areas to consider for further improvement. All elements were met, with five awarded Compliance Plus; no elements were found to be Partially Compliant.

The Assessors provided brief verbal feedback to each location following the interviews, indicating the overall findings against the CSE Standard, areas of strength and areas to consider for further improvement.

Verbal feedback was provided to the SCTS CSE Lead and a colleague on Friday, 26th September 2025. This provided the outcome of the assessment, highlighting areas of strength and those to consider as requiring further improvement. These were captured in the following report. In addition, key findings against each element are reported, which the Assessors experienced whilst undertaking the remote or in-person visits.

3. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS

Sections: 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.2.1, 2.2.4, 3.4.1

The following elements were identified as key strengths throughout the assessment and as a result awarded Compliance Plus. The element is referenced in brackets.

The Organisation gains an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of service user groups, which has subsequently led to improvements being made. Across the locations, there was strong evidence of the Trauma Informed Practice being implemented to support service users, as well as the development of a policy allowing support animals into the Courtroom and the support provided to individuals by a partner, Victim Support Scotland. Additionally, each location aims to gain an understanding of the characteristics of its service users. For example, in Tain & Wick, they recognise and accommodate the unique needs of criminal defence solicitors and solicitors acting in civil proceedings. Changes were made to the booking of slots for video conferencing hearings to prisons, to better accommodate the criminal defence solicitors.

Inverness is a large geographical area with service users living in rural areas and experiencing challenging weather conditions that can impact travel. As a result, staff utilise their insight to adapt and develop services based on individual circumstances, thereby reducing travel costs and time, and avoiding delays due to weather conditions. Whilst in ES&JoPC and Elgin, they engage in regular liaison with key support partners, such as Victim Support Scotland and Rape Crisis, to identify needs for additional measures, including the installation of privacy screens in courtrooms. The locations involved in the RR1 provided numerous examples of service user groups and demonstrated an in-depth understanding of their characteristics; as a result, this element is awarded Compliance Plus. (1.1.1)

Senior leaders and managers actively promote the corporate commitment to putting the service user at the heart of service delivery. The Corporate and local business plans outline the purpose and aims, with Service Delivery Targets (SDTs) indicating what is expected to meet or, in many cases, exceed service users' expectations. These are communicated to staff through team meetings, one-on-one meetings, and regular emails and newsletters. Consequently, staff clearly understand how they contribute to the big picture. Staff at ES&JoPC, Edinburgh Tribunals, and the Supreme Court provided examples of the positive benefits for local service users, highlighting how they contribute to the corporate purpose, aims, and SDTs, and cited improvements made to the service user experience. For example, pre-empting staff learning and development needs to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to deliver services in the future.

The smaller courts, for example, Dumbarton and Campbeltown, confirmed that they receive information and have access to learning and development opportunities, which often focus on providing excellent services for the service users. However, staff believe they have an advantage and can support service users far more easily, as they are kept up to date about the court systems, processes, and proceedings. As a result, they can respond to all enquiries at the first point of contact.

Other locations, such as Forfar, Kirkcaldy, and Inverness, referred to Summary Case Management, which demonstrates a strong corporate commitment to providing excellent services and making improvements. For example, reducing the number of repeated trials and the efforts required to ensure trials proceed, which reduces the inconvenience for Witnesses. In addition, the frequency of senior leaders visiting individual courts was cited as a strength, as they frequently advocate for the service user. Every location involved in the RR1 provided examples of the corporate commitment to providing excellent services; as a result, this element is awarded Compliance Plus. (2.1.1)

The Organisation has robust practices for recruitment, induction and ongoing learning and development. Managers explained that they look for strong customer service experience when recruiting staff, regardless of whether the service is to be provided to external or internal users. In addition, flexibility and empathy are two key soft skills, among others, that ensure service users' needs are understood and addressed. All new recruits participate in the Corporate induction, which provides an overview of the Organisation and the strategic priorities, including the service user experience. Additionally, an extensive local induction is provided, focusing on the standards and delivery of excellent services.

Throughout an employee's employment, there is a strong commitment to ongoing learning and development opportunities, which include leadership and management programmes, talent programmes, and activities that continue to develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours to provide a service user focused experience, for

example, Trauma Informed Practice. Consistently, staff confirmed that there was every opportunity to progress their career within SCTS and to learn different approaches to support service users. Every location involved in the RR1 provided examples of learning and development activities to develop staff's knowledge, skills, and behaviours; as a result, this element is awarded Compliance Plus. (2.2.1)

A range of approaches is used to gain insight and experience from service user facing staff to influence change and improvements to the services. For example, the People's Survey enables staff to express their views and opinions, and ideas and suggestions can be escalated to their manager in team and one-to-one meetings. Staff members discussed their involvement in various working groups, including the Wellbeing Working Group, the Systems Thinking Group, and the Digital Champions.

Assessors gained many examples of improvements that have been made as a result of staff's input, for example, in Campbeltown, a member of staff suggested explaining the difference between the oath and an affirmation before entering the court. In Forfar, staff provided examples of how they had contributed to developing internal policies and procedures, including modifying the system for recording court allocations on the online diaries. Whilst in Greenock, problems with Royal Mail were resolved by the staff, and an idea was implemented that resulted in a reduction of waste at lunch.

In Tain, staff-inspired a revision to the Fire Action Plan and as a result of the People Survey, a staff positivity board is being installed to recognise achievements and improve team spirit. In addition, Inverness has a staff suggestion box, which has resulted in several improvements, as a result of their input, for example, staff adapted the Juror's script, approaches have been changed when the press arrive, the training afternoon has been amended, and the SCTS instant rewards scheme has been modified. Every location involved in the RR1 provided examples of changes/ improvements made due to staff input; as a result, this element is awarded Compliance Plus. (2.2.4)

Many service users play a dual role, and actively work in partnership with SCTS, including the Police, Social Workers, Solicitors, Support Volunteers, etc. Partners spoke of the business etiquette being maintained, as all stakeholders had respect and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Interviews with partners of this nature enjoy the relationship they have with SCTS; they have trust in and respect for each other, actively working collaboratively to provide service users with a positive experience and consider ways to improve the delivery of services.

The Court Consultative Meetings and similar meetings provide an opportunity for SCTS and its partners to discuss issues and challenges and identify agreeable solutions. This indicates that all stakeholders recognise the potential for dips in performance; however, the primary objective remains to provide support to service users. Every location involved in the RR1 provided examples of collaborative working with partners; as a result, this element is awarded Compliance Plus. (3.4.1)

4. AREAS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Sections: 1.1.1, 1.2.1, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.4, 2.1.4, 3.1.1, 4.1.2, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 3.2.1, 5.3.2, 4.3.4, 2.2.1

The following elements were Compliant; however, consideration could be made to making further improvements. Reference to the element is made in brackets.

This element was recognised as a strength because locations had identified different service users and developed a thorough understanding of their characteristics. However, consideration could be given to some locations conducting a comprehensive analysis of the outcome of the Juror's survey and potentially offering Witnesses the opportunity to complete a survey. This could provide SCTS with a clear overview of the strengths across the locations and identify potential areas for improvement.

In addition, complaints are systematically collated, reviewed, and acted upon; often, complaints provide valuable insights from service users. However, the same does not apply to the compliments received. Compliments are received and recorded by staff on an ad-hoc basis, and there is no central log. Consequently, consideration could be given to documenting and analysing the compliments, which may provide a wider insight into the characteristics, needs, and preferences of service users. (1.1.1)

SCTS has many different service user segments; as a result, it may be beneficial to develop a strategic approach to provide guidance and insight on how locations could engage and involve diverse groups, such as Sheriffs, Jurors, Witnesses, Solicitors, etc., in consultation activities.

Currently, locations have adopted different approaches to engage and involve service users. Those who utilise opportunities such as Court Consultative Meetings, Local Performance Group Meetings, and Local Court Liaison Meetings receive meaningful feedback, and as a result, actively seek ways to improve the service user experience. However, those who rely on the surveys, informal feedback, comments, and complaints receive minimal issues/ concerns to be addressed, which drives little change/ improvement. Consideration could be given to encouraging locations to adopt alternative, more formal approaches to engagement and involvement, or, at the very least, actively promote the importance of feedback to increase the number of service users who respond to surveys or provide informal feedback and comments. An example of a location adopting an alternative approach was the Supreme Court. In the last year, membership of the Community Liaison Group had declined; as a result, the meeting was subsequently undertaken online, which resulted in an attendance of approximately 100 individuals. Encouraging locations to evaluate their approach to engagement and involvement may result in alternative approaches being implemented, providing a valuable source of feedback from service users. (1.2.1)

SCTS commissions an external company to complete the Court User Satisfaction Survey, which measures service user satisfaction every two years; the latest survey was undertaken in 2023. The next one is planned for this year; as a result, the Organisation is encouraged to execute the plan and share the findings throughout the second year of the CSE Rolling Review.

Currently, various locations measure service user satisfaction levels through a range of methods, including feedback forms, comments, compliments, and complaints. However, the response rates are minimal; consequently, consideration could be given to promoting opportunities for service users to increase participation levels and/or adopting alternative methods to measure satisfaction levels, for example, a single question. This may provide locations with richer feedback and identify areas to consider for further improvement.

Whilst PSU and LIU informally measure (internal) service user satisfaction levels, in the future, consideration could be made to designing a more robust approach. This may provide a clear indication of what is working well and areas that require consideration for improvement. (1.3.1)

Following the bi-annual Court User Satisfaction Survey, a report is generated indicating the findings, which is published on the SCTS website. The respective locations are expected to take ownership of the actions for improvements. However, some managers explained that they are unable to effectively disaggregate responses, which hinders the consideration of improvements to strategies, systems, or processes. Consequently, consideration could be given to either redesigning this survey or creating a local survey that can be used to identify specific areas where the court is performing well or to consider those areas for further improvement.

While courts publish data and outcomes of measuring service user satisfaction on the SCTS website, they are hidden under 'Publications' and, as a result, are difficult to find. Therefore, consideration could be given to increasing the visibility of individual court performance, enabling service users to see how a particular court is performing. (1.3.2)

At the Organisation level, the quarterly Board Scorecard indicates the service user satisfaction levels and overall performance against the CSE Standard - these are the two organisational measures. Improvements were observed between the 2021 and 2023 Court User Satisfaction Surveys; however, the 2025 Survey has not been conducted to date. As a result, SCTS is encouraged to execute the plan and share the findings during the second year CSE Rolling Review.

At the court level, service user satisfaction is measured monthly and reported quarterly, mainly through comments, compliments, and complaints. A few locations referenced the Board Scorecard; however, this was not a consistent practice. Whilst SDTs are in place, they tend to relate to the timeliness of the service, rather than satisfaction levels. Consequently, consideration could be given to adopting a similar measurement to that used corporately to measure service user satisfaction, for example, a score of 85% or higher. This would provide a consistent measure across the Organisation. (1.3.4)

The strategies, policies, and procedures are designed to ensure all service users are treated fairly. The characteristics, needs, and preferences of service users are taken into account when delivering the service. The Court Juror Survey includes a question on fairness; however, currently, this is not consistently analysed. In many locations, fairness is measured informally through the comments and complaints received; however, locations stated that they had received no comments or complaints to indicate that service users were/ were not treated fairly. While this provides a level of assurance, consideration could be given to collecting this type of feedback more consistently and robustly across the Organisation and subsequently analysing the results. This may identify additional areas to consider for further improvement. (2.1.4)

As stated in the strengths, the commitment to developing and delivering service user focused services through the recruitment and selection process, inductions, and ongoing learning and development policies for staff is robust. The following areas for improvement were shared by the different locations, which SCTS may consider in the future.

- 1) There is a limited number of places on the Administrative Officer Development Programme (AODP); consequently, there may be some value in formally supporting courts to deliver informal alternatives.
- 2) Following learning and development activities, consider how staff networking can be sustained. (2.2.1)

Information displayed on noticeboards adheres to SCTS's 'Public Notice Boards in Courts' protocol. However, some posters do not have an author identified or a date stamp, so it is unclear whether they are the current version. Furthermore, some notices are no longer required, for example, those relating to Covid-19, and those asking users to switch off lights when light switches have been replaced with non-switch movement features. Consideration could be given to updating notice boards (and in some cases SharePoint pages) to ensure the information presented is both current and identifies who to contact if there are any questions about the content.

Whilst interpreters and the use of British Sign Language (BSL) are available to service users, consideration could also be made to the use of alternatives, for example, Google Translate. This would provide an alternative channel that may meet the needs and preferences of service users. (3.1.1)

The Service User Charters were referenced, providing relevant information on managing service users' expectations. In the future, consideration could be given to Units, such as the PSU and LIU, that may benefit from having a Charter to outline the timeliness (if applicable) and standards for delivering services. This may manage the service user (internal) expectations and raise the profile of the Unit, the service's available, how to contact, who to contact, etc. (3.1.1, 4.1.2, 5.1.1, 5.1.2)

In the Supreme Court, information is available near public noticeboards, which adhere to SCTS's 'Public Notice Boards in Courts' protocol. However, they are contained within unmarked folders, for example, the Lawnmarket building. As a result, staff could consider ways to make this information more visible, thereby improving the public's awareness of their existence.

Additionally, when citation information is sent to Jurors, there is no consideration of the fact that some people

receiving this information may not find it accessible, due to having a visual impairment or disability. Consequently, as the Assessors were made aware of a new project, this could be considered for inclusion in the Juror Transformation Project. (3.2.1)

There was evidence in Kirkcaldy and Inverness that performance against SDTs is published; however, this is not a consistent practice. In ES&JoPC and other locations, the SDTs are publicised on noticeboards, along with the Service User Charter and Standards for Victims and Witnesses. However, while meeting these targets, the actual performance is not published. Consequently, consideration could be given to publishing their performance to inform service users more effectively.

The parameters and SDT's tend to be jargonistic and not easy for service users to understand, as a result, these tend to be jargonistic and not easy for service users to understand. Consideration could be made to using plain English when publicising information of this nature to facilitate service users' comprehension. (4.1.2, 5.3.2)

Across SCTS, Courts and Tribunals value feedback; comments, compliments, and complaints from service users. The findings in the smaller courts indicated that there were minimal complaints. In the future, consideration could be given to raising the profile of feedback and recording both formal and informal comments, which may highlight trends and patterns.

In a high proportion of locations, the recording of formal and informal complaints is robust, and action taken is also documented; however, this was not a consistent practice. Consideration could be made to encourage all locations to maintain a log, including actions taken, which could be shared across the Organisation.

In addition, as indicated in 1.1.1 areas for improvement, consideration could be given for each location to record the compliments received by staff centrally. This may highlight areas of good practice that could be shared across the Organisation and used to recognise individuals' contributions to the service user ethos. (4.3.4)

A high proportion of the work completed by SCTS is driven by timeframes set out within legislative processes; consequently, there are very few local SDTs. There was evidence of SDTs for timeliness of email response, for example, the service user can expect a response within five working days; however, the extent of measuring performance against this SDT was unknown. Consideration could be given to the benefits of having more robust local SDTs, which are routinely measured, for example, response time to telephone calls and the time taken to respond to an enquiry made in person.

Additionally, consideration could be given to the length of time taken to provide information to service users, as opposed to the information potentially being provided at the same time as they appear in court. This may help the service user feel more prepared for their appearance. (5.1.1)

5. ASSESSOR'S FINDINGS

- Not Compliance
- Partial Compliance
- Compliance
- Compliance Plus
- N/A

I - CUSTOMER INSIGHT

1.1 Customer Identification

We have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of our current and potential customer groups based on recent and reliable information.

It was evident that the locations are aware of the key service user groups and their characteristics and continue to stay informed about changes through the Court User Satisfaction Survey and People Survey. In addition, the close relationship ES&JoPC staff have with other partners, such as Police Scotland, the Listening Service, and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), also allows for the transfer of information about the various court user groups. Similarly, the Supreme Court has gained an in-depth understanding of service users' characteristics by developing close working relationships with them through the nature of their work, for example, Macers with Jurors, staff in the Scottish Land Court and Lands Tribunal for Scotland.

In other locations, such as Dumbaron and Campbeltown, satisfaction surveys, general feedback, comments, and complaints are used to gain insight into the needs of service users. One of the main users of the courts are considered to be Victims and Witnesses, some other users include Police, Solicitors, Volunteers, Social Work Services, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, etc., and feedback from these stakeholders includes participation in formal meetings, for example, the Court Consultative Meetings, Local Performance Group Meetings, and Local Court Liaison meetings. Edinburgh Tribunals operate various surveys, forums, and liaison groups. The forums are well attended and are referenced as a 'Forum for Change'. For example, arising from the Health & Education Chamber (HEC) forum, the content of training provided to Members and the format of documents available to children have been revised.

In Inverness and Dunfermline, Jurors are asked to complete a feedback form at the end of their service to provide insight into their experiences, such as how helpful they found the online jury guidance and how clear they found the initial telephone helpline instruction for jurors. In addition, feedback is available in the form of a suggestion box for service users to complete. Staff in Dunfermline provided specific examples of gaining insight and responding; one individual described how they had been contacted by somebody who was very worried about being a Juror the following week. They were invited into the court before their first day as jurors and given a personal tour, during which they spoke with a staff member, so that they were prepared. Another described how they engaged with Jurors to reduce the stress levels they may be feeling. After delivering information in the Jurors' Room, they play a game using the whiteboard.

Several locations benefit from having a number of staff who have been with the Organisation for many years and have developed a good understanding of the different service user groups and their characteristics. For example, Witnesses are potentially going to feel uncomfortable in the Courtroom. As a result, they are invited to visit the Court before the hearing, take a tour, and learn about the proceedings. There is in-depth insight and understanding that many service users experience trauma in their lives.

Some staff comments included:

"For many of our customers, coming to Court is as traumatic as the crimes against them. We need to acknowledge this and see how we can reduce their anxieties".

"People come here who are stressed because they are in Court, we need to take this into account when we are dealing with them".

The Property Services Unit (PSU) and Legislation Implementation Team (LIT) recognise that their primary service user is internal, providing services to enable them to support external service users. Service User insight is constantly being gained by these units, which influence changes and improvements to the internal and external service user experience.

This element is awarded Compliance Plus - refer to section 3 of the report.

● 1.2.1 **We have a strategy for engaging and involving customers using a range of methods appropriate to the needs of identified customer groups.**

Currently, there is no written customer engagement involvement strategy at Organisation or local level, However, the Change and Digital Innovation (CDi) Unit undertakes consultation regarding topics that address the whole Organisation, for example, Online Endorsable Fines Payment; to provide additional options and address the changes in service users habits/ lifestyles, Trauma Informed Domestic Abuse Project; to provide support to sexual and domestic abuse service users, and more recently the Jury Transformation Project; Invest to Save, whereby the service user journey is under scrutiny from start to finish. There was evidence of various consultation methods, including the Front Door Forum, meetings with staff, Jurors, the Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Operations teams, Research Users, and Service Users.

At the location level, various methods are employed to engage and consult with service users. In the ES&JoPC, the Court User Satisfaction Survey, complaints data, and internal meetings, such as those with the Solemn COPFS, provide a platform for discussing and resolving any emerging issues. In Dumbarton, feedback, comments and complaints, and the quarterly Court Consultation Meetings for justice partners (Police, Volunteers, Social Workers, staff, etc.) across Civil and Criminal business to discuss any changes to legislation, systems and processes, issues, or concerns; individuals can contribute their ideas and suggestions to contribute to improving the customer experience. Some improvements made as a result include developing a plan of action to manage the impact of delays on service users, and the witness walkaround was introduced in response to feedback from various stakeholders. Another service user explained that at the next Court Consultative Meeting, they planned to discuss the concern about courts closing during lunch periods and the potential impact on Witnesses.

Other locations have designed alternative approaches; for example, service user involvement and engagement in Forfar, Dunfermline, and Kirkcaldy have been enhanced with the introduction of Summary Case Management. This has resulted in improvements to case processing times. In addition, there have been further improvements such as jury payments and endorsable fines which can now be made online, as the need to attend court in person has been removed. Additionally, a doorbell has been installed to facilitate access for individuals using wheelchairs.

In Greenock, the consultation strategy and approach were adapted, and areas for improvement were identified. In addition, service user insights have been further informed by the court, which maintains a record of suggestions, complaints, and compliments received. Tain and Wick host bi-monthly Court Advisory (CA) meetings, which include key stakeholders, such as Defence and Civil Agents, Social Workers, GeoAmey, Police Scotland, and Witness Services.

In Lanark, the bi-monthly Local Performance Group Meetings and quarterly Local Court Liaison meetings provide the opportunity to discuss any issues. Recently, a Summary Case Management Legislation Implementation Group (LIG) has been introduced to engage with other justice partners to support more vulnerable service users, such as those who have previously suffered domestic abuse.

Currently, the Grampian and Highland Courts are piloting work to meet the needs of those most vulnerable to domestic abuse more effectively. Work is well advanced to look at how these Victims can receive services that will allow them to make more choices and have their trauma levels reduced.

Within the Property Services Unit, the Facilities Management and Liaison Meetings include staff, service users and partners. This provides an opportunity to discuss various aspects of the services provided, such as access to cells for cleaning, standards of cleanliness, and the timely delivery of services, among others. Improvements to these meetings have been made by ensuring the individual attending is at the right level and able to make decisions.

● **1.3.1 We use reliable and accurate methods to measure customer satisfaction on a regular basis.**
There is a corporate strategy that measures the service user satisfaction level in court locations every two years. Additionally, each location has adopted its own approach to measuring satisfaction levels, for example, locally designed surveys, feedback cards/ forms, training evaluations, suggestion boxes, comments, compliments, and complaints. Other examples used by several courts include service user group forums, the Court Consultative Meeting and the Local Implementation Group (LIG) Meeting. In some courts, for example, Greenock, the Court Officers frequently ask service users how satisfied they are with areas within the court's responsibilities, such as opening hours, building and staff.

● **1.3.2 We analyse and publicise satisfaction levels for the full range of customers for all main areas of our service and we have improved services as a result.**
Following the bi-annual Court User Satisfaction Survey, the findings are analysed, and a report is generated, which provides a summary of the ratings, highlights what is working well, and identifies areas for further improvement. Subsequently, the report is published on the SCTS website, and the respective locations take ownership of the action to be taken. At this stage, it is promoted through various meetings and newsletters, as well as the 'You Said, We Did' notices displayed.

The findings from the service user group forums, the Court Consultative Meeting and the LIG Meeting are reported in the respective minutes. On occasion, decisions are made in the meeting, which result in improvements. Alternatively, the issue/ challenge is analysed, action is taken, and the feedback is fed back at the next meeting. In addition, the action taken will also be published through the 'You Said, We Did' notice.

Similarly, as a result of analysing local feedback through surveys, comments and complaints, areas for improvement are identified. Many examples were gained throughout this Rolling Review 1, including Dumbarton, where informal feedback was received regarding the standard of the court lunch. As a result, the court clearly communicated to the different service user groups what they could expect, provided pictures for those who experienced reading/ language barriers and published the action taken on the 'You Said, We Did' notice.

In Tain and Wick, feedback was received regarding the hearing loop system, which prompted a comprehensive review of the system. This was communicated to service users through various channels. In Forfar, there was insufficient information relating to public transport for service users. As a result, the court provides current bus timetables, which are displayed on the notice board in the foyer, as well as a list of local taxis.

In Greenock, the building was cold in various areas; as a result, improvements to the heating system were made, additional radiators were installed, and the upgrades were communicated to service users. In Elgin, a grit box was procured and installed at the main entrance in response to service user concerns, thereby enhancing safety during adverse weather conditions.

The PSU reviewed the outcome of the Court User Satisfaction Survey and took action at the relevant Courts, which was subsequently promoted. PSU and LIU rely on comments, compliments, and complaints every month, which are used as a measure of satisfaction and highlight areas to consider for improvement. For example, feedback regarding the role of the reception team resulted in greater clarity being provided to ensure service users understood what they could expect from them. Specifically, despite being service user facing, the staff were not qualified to provide legal advice to the public.

● **1.3.4 We set challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and our levels are improving.**

The SCTS Board Scorecard is reported every quarter, with updates provided to the SCTS Board and Executive Team. The updates monitor progress in relation to the seven strategic priorities and financial performance, which includes service user satisfaction. Minutes from Board Meetings are published on the SCTS Webpage, which include discussions related to the Scorecard.

The Scorecard uses the RAG (red, amber, green) rating system, which indicates performance in relation to each strategic priority. The thresholds for service users' satisfaction are:

- Red <65% overall service user satisfaction levels and/ or failure to maintain CSE accreditation.
- Amber 65% - 78% overall service user satisfaction levels and/ or CSE maintained, but with deterioration in assessment (net decline in level of assessment in 5 or more elements compared to the previous year).
- Green >78% overall service user satisfaction levels and CSE assessment, maintaining or improving (above the threshold for amber).

Several locations, such as Lanark and the Supreme Court, explained that they had service user satisfaction targets and monitored their performance. Most locations, including Inverness, Dunfermline, Elgin, and Kirkcaldy, understood how they performed against the SDTs, for example, consistently achieving 100% of these metrics. However, there was uncertainty about how they measured satisfaction rates beyond comments and complaints, which are monitored weekly at the local level and quarterly by the Board.

2 - THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

2.1 Leadership, Policy and Culture

● 2.1.1

There is corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in our organisation actively support this and advocate for customers.

Staff across the Organisation confirmed a strong corporate commitment to placing the service user at the centre of service delivery, with leaders actively supporting and advocating for them. Assessors gathered many examples of this being implemented:

SCTS's values are displayed in courts and discussed with staff. One staff member said, "The values are spot on; we give an outstanding service. Everybody is the same, nobody is judged. We try to do a great job, SCTS is passionate about what we do". Others echoed similar words.

Staff have objectives based around the values, which are reviewed within team and one-to-one meetings. Staff across the courts referenced documents, including the SCTS Users' Charter ('Our Promise to You'), and Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses, which are displayed on public notice boards. The principles and approaches outlined in the Charter are utilised by courts to inform service user support. SCTS is strategically implementing Summary Case Management across all courts, which is expected to improve the customer experience. In addition, several courts explained that at the Organisation level, there is an awareness that many service users experience trauma. As a result, a decision was made to provide mandatory trauma training to provide appropriate support.

Staff in Tain and Wick Courts stated that a core corporate value is placing the customer at the centre of all their activities. Conversations with service users indicated they received excellent service from both teams. They have adopted technology to make services more accessible, as shown by the facility to pay fines online and the 'Civil Online' system for electronic filing. Additionally, to address critical, time-sensitive issues, a member of staff is assigned to the emergency telephone line daily until 17.00, and the Wick Sheriff Clerk provides their mobile number for emergencies. Furthermore, there is a flexible approach to Court operations, including where possible scheduling hearings around service user availability and offering early calls or virtual appearances to reduce stress and improve access.

Once again, in Elgin Court, the Assessor found a strong commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery, with active support from management. An annual, in-person visit from an SCTS Director enables staff to voice their opinions and submit questions in advance, which will be addressed on the day. A dedicated Staff Engagement Day is held annually, providing staff with the opportunity to set aside their daily work and discuss court-related matters, often themed around customer service and expectations.

In Dumbarton, monthly team meetings focus on the service user experience to ensure expectations are managed effectively. Staff are aware of the Customer Charter, what it means in practice, and also referenced the behaviours. There was a culture of collaborative working, as Dumbarton, Campbeltown, and Oban supported each other to deliver services to users and achieve the SDTs.

In Inverness, staff shared numerous examples of how they put the service user at the heart of their operations. An emergency contact number has been provided to justice partners for an hour after the court closes, allowing contact between 16:00 and 17:00. A Vulnerable Witness Suite has been created to enable witnesses to give their evidence remotely, without the necessity of attending court or seeing the accused.

This element is awarded Compliance Plus - refer to section 3 of the report.

● **2.1.4 We ensure that all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is confirmed by feedback and the measurement of customer experience.**

There is a strong commitment to ensure service users and groups are treated fairly, with individual needs and preferences being met. The Organisation has Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB) Policies. The policies were seen to be posted in all staff areas, and a mandatory e-learning module is available for all staff. In addition, Trauma Informed Practice, Unconscious Bias, and more recently, Sexual Harassment training have been introduced to equip staff with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours to provide an excellent service to all users. The Service User Charters clearly state what ALL users can expect.

There were many examples of providing the service to ensure accessibility and fairness for Tribunal service users who are often complex (in terms of their needs) and vulnerable. This manifests itself in many ways, for example, being flexible in terms of where tribunals are held, creating a dedicated website for 12 to 15-year-olds who are vulnerable, and establishing a dedicated hearing venue for vulnerable young people. In Greenock, systems and processes have been designed to meet the needs of different service users. These include hearing loops for those who are hard of hearing and digital video conferencing facilities for those living remotely. A report on Dunfermline included the following statement - 'all staff treat the customers who walk through the front door the same, you have to be respectful, and be aware of the challenges they are under'.

Some comments received from staff included:

"I see people from different backgrounds and different circumstances every hour, my colleagues and I treat them all the same need to keep remembering that most people don't want to be here, and that we have to treat everybody the same".

"We just learn that we have to treat people as equals; it is drummed into us not to judge. If we treat them with respect, then they will treat us with respect".

"There have been zero formal complaints, combined with no negative feedback in surveys, providing tangible evidence of successful prevention of discrimination and ensure fairness at all times".

"Every interaction is informed by the SCTS values, which mandate courtesy, transparency, fairness, professionalism, exemplary conduct, and personal accountability".

2.2 Staff Professionalism and Attitude

● **2.2.1 We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.**

There is a robust approach to recruitment and selection across the Organisation, as they seek to employ individuals with customer service experience and subsequently build upon their knowledge, skills, and behaviours. Greenock and Dunfermline explained the success of the centralised recruitment. All interviewees confirmed that there was a strong commitment to ongoing learning and development, enabling them to progress their careers, contribute to policy, and deliver excellent services. Consistently, staff spoke of the Trauma Informed Practice and the opportunities to further develop their skills in working with service users who have a wide range of characteristics, needs, and preferences. The PSU described the learning and development opportunities to support the service user ethos, ensuring everyone is treated fairly and with respect. These opportunities included Unconscious Bias training, managing difficult people, and addressing recurring issues with the same individuals.

Learning and development opportunities are available through a range of programmes and courses, face-to-face and online. Staff training days, team meetings, a buddy system, shadowing, and one-to-one meetings with line managers all provide learning opportunities. The Education and Learning Unit offers various Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes, which are also available to frontline staff. SCTS produces a weekly newsletter which includes a booking form from the Education and Learning Unit for the courses detailed.

This element is awarded Compliance Plus - refer to section 3 of the report.

● **2.2.4 We can demonstrate how customer facing staff insights, and experiences are incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning.**

A range of approaches are utilised to gain frontline staff's insight and experience contributing to the development of internal processes, policy development, and service planning.

There was evidence of locations implementing effective activities. For example, ES&JoPC operates working groups that receive and consider information related to staff and customer experiences. The People's Survey encourages staff to share their ideas and suggestions, and as a result, each team prepares an action plan in response, which is monitored. This approach was echoed by staff at Inverness. In addition, ES&JoPC staff learn from the input of others, for example, the Listening Service staff (a partner) and Court Officers (CO), whose knowledge and experience contributed to the production of a CO handbook. Staff confirmed that they feel able to raise issues with managers and are listened to, which has led to service improvements, such as streamlining jury service and enhancing extradition procedures.

In Forfar, the outcomes of the staff survey have been used to implement changes. For example, staff requested that senior colleagues be more visible, and as a result, more contact is now in place. A 'You Said, We Did' staff summary was produced, and communication about ongoing changes is more effective.

At the Supreme Court, several working groups operate, which receive and consider information related to staff and customer experiences, such as the Family Action Users Group and the Customer Liaison Group. These meetings often involve internal and external service users. Improvements arising from these relationships include revising electronic documents (Family Action) to ensure compatibility with the software platforms used by each group. In the Inner House team, improvements have been made to the calling-up process as a result of feedback from agents.

At the Edinburgh Tribunal, staff have opportunities to adjust hearings, for example, by changing venues and other aspects of service delivery to benefit attendees. A risk assessment has been established by staff for instances where a tribunal attendee wishes to bring a companion dog to a hearing. Additionally, when a piece of legislation related to evidence arising from tribunals held overseas came into effect, staff prepared a procedure to facilitate this situation.

In Dunfermline, staff insights are gathered to inform future improvements through staff meetings. Examples include the frequency of printing Royal Mail labels, Clerks sending out links for video sessions, panic buttons being installed at frontline desks after an incident with a service user, and the development of procedures for dealing with unsealed documents.

Kirkcaldy Court staff meetings provide staff with the opportunity to share their insight to influence future improvements. For example, removing the automatic read function, installing a frosted glass door to minimise service users' feelings of inhibition, and reconfiguring physical space to ensure Witnesses would not come across certain people. One team holds a daily 9:09 meeting, as well as monthly meetings, during which staff can make suggestions or observations on how a situation can be addressed or an issue resolved. Whilst in Elgin, internal user groups focus on current topics, such as summary case management, to ensure grassroots input on major initiatives, which have resulted in changes and improvements being made.

Within the PSU and LIU, various methods are employed, including escalating ideas to a manager, holding team meetings, and administering the People Survey. Eighteen out of twenty-two staff members in PSU completed the People's Survey, as they believe the Director actively addresses the findings. In addition, PSU staff can participate in Union, Committee, and Partnership meetings to have their voice heard.

This element is awarded Compliance Plus - refer to section 3 of the report.

3 - INFORMATION AND ACCESS

3.1 Range of Information

● **3.1.1 We make information about the full range of services we provide available to our customers and potential customers, including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is in charge.**

The SCTS and individual court or tribunal websites are the primary sources of information for service users, along with public notice boards and SharePoint pages. The 2023 Court User Satisfaction Survey indicated that 91% of respondents confirmed that information was either fairly or very easy to find when needed. Jurors are signposted to the 'Coming to Court' area of the SCTS website, where they can access information about what they can expect.

The information provided to service users includes policies, posters, and leaflets, which are displayed on notice boards in reception areas, Juror Rooms, Witness Rooms, and in other locations, for example, outside the Courtrooms and the public counter. The information includes the range of services, what service users can expect (as outlined in the Service User Charter), location(s), contact(s), opening times, the complaints process, and 'You Said, We Did'. In addition, posters advising service users of the support available in finance, family, and victim issues, as well as contact information for the police, are also provided. Court sheets for journalists are made available for local press in advance of hearings.

Other channels used to provide information to service users include email footers, newsletters, and one-off posters. These are used, for example, to give advance notice of any court closures, which are displayed on the front doors and public counters in the week leading up to an event. In addition, staff welcome service users and partners, providing relevant information upon arrival. Victim Support Scotland witness volunteers are also available to guide witnesses around the courts and offer additional information to prepare them for the courtroom.

Service users are informed that they can request an interpreter, including BSL, through one of three preferred suppliers.

● **3.2.1 We provide our customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels.**

A variety of channels are used to provide information, including websites, SharePoint, email, telephone, notice boards, mail, Microsoft Teams / Webex, and in-person meetings.

The service user determines communication channels; for example, if they connect via email, a response will be provided by email, unless an alternative method is requested.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a substantial increase in the use of digital channels to provide information and access services. This provides numerous benefits, including, but not limited to, reducing travel time and costs, especially in remote areas. In addition, it can protect Witnesses and reduce their anxiety about appearing in court, as well as being advantageous for various vulnerable service user groups (such as children and older people), resulting in fewer instances of needing to appear in a courtroom.

Service users with specific needs, such as hearing loss, can benefit from a hearing loop, and those for whom English is not their first language can use Language Identification Cards, with requests for interpreters and BSL being responded to promptly.

SCTS recognise that service users have different needs and preferences, and as a result, continually review and update the information. Some examples included service users having different levels of technical proficiency, and to accommodate this, a detailed step-by-step guide for Webex is provided, which meets the needs of those who prefer written, self-paced instructions over digital platforms. For exceptionally vulnerable witnesses, a standard video link may not be sufficient, so a secure vulnerable witness link from an alternative court is used, which prioritises their emotional needs and preference for safety. In addition, each location develops a wide array of informational leaflets, based on feedback, which are made readily available to the public, covering essential topics from drug counselling services to local bus routes. Locations present the information in different ways, several in a highly creative and engaging format to maximise its effectiveness and appeal.

The Health and Education Chamber (HEC) maintain a version of its website called 'needs to learn' which is a specific version designed to be accessed by children aged 12-15 years. The website contains unique images that are incorporated into wider documentation and hearing facilities, so the children will be able to identify them with the Tribunal. The initial design of the website incorporated input from several children with additional support needs and members of the Tribunal who specialise in additional support needs. Further, the website has been enhanced by the development of animations and videos on the tribunal process. These videos are available with subtitles, with BSL interpretation and in Makaton.

● **3.3.1 We make our services easily accessible to all customers through provision of a range of alternative channels.**

Each location strives to offer easy access to its services. Historically, appearances at Courts and Tribunals were in-person; however, alternative methods can be used, for example, Webex and Microsoft Teams video links. In addition, services can be accessed by telephone, online and in some cases through attendance at public counters, for example, payment of fines/fees.

Edinburgh Tribunal users are provided with accessibility forms when they initially make contact. This outlines the specific requirements for correspondence and any additional requirements for a hearing. These requirements are taken into consideration when arranging hearings and booking suitable venues. Furthermore, where appropriate, users are asked about their hearing preference, and this information is taken into consideration when scheduling hearings. Edinburgh Tribunal offer a range of hearing delivery methods to suit user needs, including in-person, video, telephone, paper, and hybrid.

Forfar, Tain, and Wick, like other locations, have improved accessibility to services by providing alternative channels, such as evidence suites and live links, to the court premises. These accessibility channels are available to all stakeholders, including the Accused, the Victim, Witnesses, Police, Social Workers, and others, and can facilitate in-person, remote, or hybrid hearings. Customers can also access the Civil Online platform and a 24-hour telephone line to access the fines/fees payment system.

In several locations, a staffed reception area is available to assist customers in accessing services. In addition, separate enquiry desks are maintained for users of Civil and Criminal case services. When staff work with customers online, a secure courtroom is available to ensure privacy.

● 3.4.1

We have made arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for our customers.

SCTS works collaboratively with many service users, who are also viewed as partners, including the Police, Social Workers, Solicitors, and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, which is referenced as a strength. Other key partnerships include organisations such as Victim Support Scotland, whereby volunteers provide information to Witnesses to prepare them for their appearance in court, managing their expectations and reducing their anxiety levels. SCTS values this partnership, as it benefits both Witnesses and the Police, Social Workers, and Solicitors.

Partnership arrangements are in place with GeoAmey (the current prisoner escort transportation service) and contractors delivering cleaning and maintenance services. Whilst there have been issues with some providers, SCTS and individual locations have challenged standards, intending to improve the services provided.

Each location explained the different partnerships in place and how these contributed to providing benefits to the service users. Where issues with service delivery are experienced, these are discussed and closely monitored to ensure service standards are returned to an acceptable level. Other examples of working in partnership include the Edinburgh Tribunal working with the Change and Digital Innovation Team. This has allowed information about individuals to be shared with the Social Security Scotland team. This work involved the development of a portal that allows users to track the progress of their own hearing.

Forfar hosts an annual Doors Open Day Event, which allows members of the public the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Court system. It also offers work experience opportunities to local high schools and welcomes school visits. A partner stated that "Forfar Court staff keep me informed about what is happening, they ask for my advice, and it is listened to".

The Court Liaison Meetings are held every three months. These are effective in fostering partnership working as they lead to improvements in the service user experience, with examples including: installing metal detectors and other security measures in the Court building on Thursdays, as this was the busiest day; and reviewing workloads to distribute cases across different days, which also resulted in more cases being handled.

In Greenock, daily communication takes place between the Victim Support Scotland charity's Volunteers and the court staff. The benefit of Greenock Court and the Charity working together is that the service user receives emotional support.

In Inverness, the Court Advisory Meeting includes staff and a wide range of partners, including Sheriffs, Police Scotland, Justice Social Work, Victim Support Scotland, GeoAmey, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), HM Prison Inverness, Highland Council, local solicitors, and the Community Justice Partnership. This provides an effective platform for partners to collaborate and agree on future changes and improvements, such as implementing disabled access to the building. One partner stated that "SCTS have been terrific, they know what we are trying to do, and they help us all they can".

Other comments from partners included:

"The Court Liaison Group is fantastic; it provides an effective platform for us to work with partners and to resolve issues together".

"I don't have an official team, but working with Kirkcaldy Court staff and other partners means that I feel they are my Team".

"The Kirkcaldy Court staff are the glue that keep us all together, they bring us in and make sure we get things done".

This element is awarded Compliance Plus - refer to section 3 of the report.

4 - DELIVERY

4.1 Delivery Standards

● **4.1.1 We have challenging standards for our main services, which take account of our responsibility for delivering national and statutory standards and targets.**

SCTS has challenging standards to be maintained, including national and statutory standards and targets. Service standards, targets and plans for the SCTS are approved by its independent Board - in line with relevant legislation. SCTS works closely with the Scottish Government and partner agencies involved in the justice system to ensure that its plans and targets support the most effective service delivery to those using the justice system. At the Organisation level, the seven strategic priorities are underpinned by numerous SDTs, including the service user satisfaction level of +85%. SDTs are cascaded to teams and individuals; a vast majority of these are based on the timeliness of delivering the services. For example, the length of time to process a divorce (civil case) application is five days, and to issue a decree in one day, whilst there is a caseload validation SDT set at 95% within criminal business. Other SDTs include a measure of the number of outstanding trials and trial waiting periods; issue a court document confirming the authorising administration of a deceased person's estate within three working days.

All court and tribunal locations were aware of the SDTs for their respective service. Several locations referenced the service commitments within the Service User Charter and the Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses.

Similarly, PSU has standards set by the Scottish Government and Union, which ensure systems and processes are followed. Several SDTs are imposed on the PSU, which are relevant to the respective team and range from monitoring cash balances and absence rates to monthly reporting, as well as completing health and safety audits, recording and reporting incidents and near misses. Currently, the three teams within the LIU do not have specific SDTs to achieve.

● **4.1.2 We monitor and meet our standards, meet departmental and performance targets, and we tell our customers about our performance.**

Performance against standards is monitored and evaluated at various times and levels. For example, the Board Scorecard is presented to the Board every quarter for evaluation, while Senior Operations Managers, Heads of Operations, and Directors undertake a monthly analysis of performance. This enables critical decisions to be made, risks to be managed, and provides insight into key impacts for service users.

In some locations, for example, Inverness and Dumbarton, performance against the SDTs is discussed at the Court Advisory Meetings or Court Consultative Meetings (which involve service users and partners), with concerns about performance being raised, discussed, and subsequently addressed.

Managers and staff review performance on a weekly basis, and in some cases, a daily assessment of progress is undertaken to ensure they are on track to achieve the SDTs.

Managers within the Courts and Tribunals clearly understood how their teams were performing. For example, in Dumbarton, the time to process a divorce application was met, as well as the validation target for criminal cases, which is 95%, and the average performance is 96% or above. In Forfar, as a result of analysing performance, it was identified that there was an increase in outstanding trials. Similarly, in Greenock, trial dates should be within 11 weeks, but the time period was 14 to 16 weeks. The investigation revealed that this was due to the use of adjourned trial data instead, and as a result, training was provided to prevent recurrence in the future.

In the Edinburgh Tribunal, following the monthly meeting, the scorecard is published on the Tribunal's intranet site, where all staff can access it. In the Supreme Court, performance is published in the newsletter, and a framework document shows that targets are monitored, and service users are informed. Whilst in other locations, such as Inverness and Elgin, performance data is published for the public to view on notice boards. However, publishing performance data for the public was not consistent across the Organisation.

● **4.2.1 We agree with our customers at the outset what they can expect from the service we provide.**

SCTS provide service users with a wealth of information to ensure they understand what they can expect, such as websites, notice boards with posters and leaflets, including the Service User Charter, Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses, and the Complaints Process. Additionally, newsletters, the Citation, and telephone calls to Jurors all help outline expectations.

A protocol is in place between SCTS, the Crown Office, Police Scotland, and Victim Support Scotland, which aims to help a Victim or Witness understand what they can expect when in court. Staff across the locations provided many examples of working with service users to ensure they understood what to expect.

● **4.3.1 We identify any dips in performance against our standards and explain these to customers, together with action we are taking to put things right and prevent further recurrence.**

As a result of the scrutiny and evaluation of performance, as described in element 4.1.2, dips in performance are quickly identified and action taken to avoid further recurrence. For example, Edinburgh Tribunal staff have developed a Recovery Plan to schedule hearings to avoid delays. ES&JoPC has adopted a system of using automated response messages on emails where there may be service delays. Additionally, internal meetings, such as Solemn Crime and COPFS meetings, serve as vehicles through which teams can discuss and resolve any emerging issues.

Managers also provided examples of mitigating the risk of performance dipping, for example, in Dumbarton, on the morning of the assessment at 9.55am, it came to light that a Sheriff had not been scheduled to attend the court that morning. The Office Manager recognised the impact this would have on several service users, including Victims and Witnesses, Solicitors, Police, and Social Workers. A Sheriff from another Court was found, and whilst the cases ran late in the morning, the reason was communicated to the service users, and the impact was minimised.

In Forfar, Kirkcaldy, and Dunfermline, the Local Implementation Group (LIG) and Court Liaison Meetings monitor the monthly performance reports to identify any changes and fluctuations in performance. For example, in Forfar, targets related to 'extracts' were not being met, and further investigation revealed that this was due to a miscommunication regarding responsibilities. Consequently, a new process was set up, which has improved performance, and the SDT is now being met.

In Greenock, the Court Sheriff Clerk and Office Manager monitor SDTs to identify any performance reductions and then take action as a result. This is complemented by changes in process and working practices when a formal complaint has been upheld. It was noted that there had been no change in the trials' delay period at Greenock Court for either the current or previous time period. To address this, the trial court's programming was modified to create additional capacity for both adjourned trials and domestic abuse trials.

In the event of a service delay, communication to staff, service users and partners is of high importance. As a result, key messages are designed and circulated promptly to minimise the impact on the different stakeholders. The PSU and Inverness recently worked on the discovery of a gas leak in the building where Inverness Court is located. A range of processes and systems were implemented to support staff, including guidelines to follow when in the building. The Victim Support Scotland Office provided a temporary location for staff, and the reason for the delayed trials was communicated.

In Elgin, the court lost power, and immediately a message was posted on the Elgin Sheriff Court website, along with an automated email response, to notify service users of the disruption and potential delays. The local press was contacted and issued a press release to ensure widespread public awareness. Staff were deployed to the building's entrance to greet service users, explain the situation, and manually record transactions, such as fine payments, for future processing once the systems were restored. This reduced the potential risk of delays in the delivery of the services.

● **4.3.4 We learn from any mistakes we make by identifying patterns in formal and informal complaints and comments from customers and use this information to improve services and publicise action taken.**

The Board, Senior Leaders, and Managers closely scrutinise performance across SCTS, including feedback and complaints. SCTS' Information Governance and Correspondence Team (IGCT) receive a monthly complaints return from each location, which is then cumulated with returns from other courts. This provides insight into potential trends and patterns, which may affect service delivery.

Managers take ownership of mistakes that may occur, for example, when a reasonable adjustment for a service user has been identified but not implemented, and this is resolved promptly. In Inverness, following a complaint, staff were reminded about the SCTS Brand Guidelines for emails, which emphasise that emails are a formal communication channel and that the Civil Team should prioritise service user emails. In Greenock, it was established that there were issues with cases being continued without a plea due to difficulties with service and churn. This issue is to be resolved by recruiting two new Justices of the Peace.

Changes and improvements made to services as a result of formal and informal complaints are communicated to the complainant and published in the 'You Said, We Did' for all service users to access.

5 - TIMELINESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE

5.1 Standards for Timeliness and Quality

● **5.1.1 We set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness of response for all forms of customer contact including phone calls, letters, e-communications and personal callers.**

Many standards and STDs are time-bound, which include:

- Responding within five working days to an email or letter of enquiry,
- Preparing final decrees in ordinary actions and simplified divorce actions within one day,
- Processing ordinary divorce cases within five days,
- Issuing extract decrees within three days,
- Completing post court procedures in criminal cases within one working day,
- Paying Jurors' expense claims within two working days of acceptance,
- Acknowledging the complaint within three working days, and the investigation responding to the complaint as soon as possible, but within 20 days.

It was noted that there were no standards or SDTs for answering the telephone; the Assessors were advised that the telephony system rang until it was answered.

Staff explained that there were SDTs for responding to enquiries made via telephone, email, post, and in-person; however, consistently, they aim to respond within the SDT, as they put themselves in the shoes of the service user and, as a result, would want a quick response.

● **5.1.2 We set comprehensive standards for all aspects of the quality of customer service to be expected in all dealings with our organisation.**

Staff referenced the Service User Charter and Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses, which are the primary documents that outline the standards expected in relation to the quality of service. In addition, they explained the Organisation's values (respect, service, and excellence) and behaviours that outline what is expected of them, as well as the one-to-one discussions with line managers, which are part of the MyCareer Performance process.

As previously stated, the Service User Charter and Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses are available and accessible to all service users through websites, posters and leaflets on notice boards, as well as via SCTS staff and partners such as the Police, Solicitors, Social Workers, Victim Support Scotland witness volunteers, etc.

● **5.3.1 We monitor our performance against standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we take action if problems are identified.**

The standards for timeliness and quality of service are monitored and evaluated as indicated in 4.1.2, and action is taken if problems arise. Please refer to 4.3.1. An example of a problem being identified was found in the three-day SDT for lodging and returning of confirmation, which had been consistently met; however, there was a dip in performance. As a result, a training schedule for staff was provided on prioritisation, which addressed the issue. Another location explained the impact of staff absence due to long-term sickness, whilst dips in performance may occur, three Courts, Dumbarton, Campbeltown and Oban, work collaboratively to ensure the SDTs for timeliness of service are achieved.

● **5.3.2 We are meeting our current standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we publicise our performance against these standards.**

At the time of the RR1, there was evidence that the standards for timeliness and quality of service were being met. Ongoing scrutiny ensures that potential dips in performance are identified quickly, and action is taken to minimise their impact.

Performance against the standards and SDTs for timeliness and quality of service are publicised, as indicated in 4.1.2

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I am pleased to pass on to Assessment Services Ltd.'s Certification Committee my recommendation that the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service retain its Customer Service Excellence Standard certification.

The second year Rolling Review will be due to take place in September 2026.

Thank you to the Senior Service Delivery Support Manager, as well as to all supporting colleagues and interviewees, for their cooperation during the first year of the Rolling Review against the Customer Service Excellence Standard with Assessment Services Ltd.

Lorna Bainbridge

Registered Customer Service Excellence Assessor for Assessment Services Ltd

Date: 26th September 2025

7. COMPLIANCE AGAINST THE CSE (NEW CYCLE) STANDARD

1 - Customer Insight

	Element	Accreditation
1.1	1.1.1	● Compliance Plus
1.2	1.2.1	● Compliance
1.3	1.3.1	● Compliance
	1.3.2	● Compliance
	1.3.4	● Compliance

2 - The Culture of the Organisation

	Element	Accreditation
2.1	2.1.1	● Compliance Plus
	2.1.4	● Compliance
2.2	2.2.1	● Compliance Plus
	2.2.4	● Compliance Plus

3 - Information and Access

	Element	Accreditation
3.1	3.1.1	● Compliance
3.2	3.2.1	● Compliance
3.3	3.3.1	● Compliance
3.4	3.4.1	● Compliance Plus

4 - Delivery

	Element	Accreditation
4.1	4.1.1	● Compliance
	4.1.2	● Compliance
4.2	4.2.1	● Compliance
4.3	4.3.1	● Compliance
	4.3.4	● Compliance

5 - Timeliness and Quality of Service

	Element	Accreditation
5.1	5.1.1	● Compliance
	5.1.2	● Compliance

	Element	Accreditation
5.3	5.3.1	● Compliance
	5.3.2	● Compliance

ANNEX 1 - Additional Quotes

Staff

“Culturally, I am able to pick up on things with more senior staff”.

“When you see someone getting a good experience, it means we are doing a good job”:

“We treat all witnesses as if they are vulnerable; that way, we know we will be doing the best by them”.

“We provide a good service, people know we are independent, so they are more open to working with us”.

“When we get a complaint, the team are very good at turning things around – we get complimented on this”.

“We over explain and simplify things, which people find helpful”.

“Often customers just want to be heard, so we are good at listening”.

“I have been able to shadow others to develop my career”.

“I prioritise my work at the start of each day to ensure I can meet my SDT”.

“We are a public facing service, dealing with people from all walks of life, so treating them all well is a key focus for us”.

“We are able to listen to their needs and make changes in real time”.

“Given that we work to a legislative framework, our role is to make it as smooth as possible, with no road bumps”.

“We can’t always say our customers are pleased, because they don’t want to be here, but we do look after them”.

“If we feel respected and valued, then this is transferred onto our customers who get a better experience”.

“Being here has helped me see how a focus on providing a good customer service can lead to better outcomes for whoever the customer is”. (work experience)

“Staff understand their service users, and the challenges many of them face”.

“We take pride in being friendly and professional with people like Jurors and Witnesses who do not want to be here. We aim to be as empathetic as we can”.

“Staff understand that for many of our customers, being here is because something has gone wrong in their lives. This means customers can be defensive and stressed. We understand and we try to help them to get through”.

“Dedicated service, space is tight, especially in Tain – no room for private conversations. We work collaboratively, respectfully and are able to solve problems together with friendly staff”.

“We are about meeting our customers’ needs, and we care about our customers”.

“Good opportunities to work in other courts and train as a relief officer. Enjoy the variety of work. No barrier to talking to management and lots of informal opportunities. Feel valued.”

“We look out for each other. Technology has been useful, especially after lockdown”.

Service User

“I have been here before, and they are good at making adjustments for me because I have some mobility issues”.

Partners / Service Users

“Given the circumstances in which people visit the courts, ES&JoPC staff do give a good service and make things as smooth as possible”.

“We work closely with ES&JoPC staff because the better our relationship is, the better it is for all those involved and saves the court time”.

“ES&JoPC staff are open to us assessing the risks and providing advice, which helps everyone concerned”.

“We are not here to judge anyone, we are here to administer justice, so we do things which make that as straightforward as possible”.

“Our relationship is strong and collaborative, I feel projects are things we do together”.

“Being able to explain in a way that is not condescending makes people feel valued”.

“We can show respect through the use of plain English, cutting out the jargon”.

“We are all small teams, we discuss everything, and we make it work”.

“One hundred per cent efficient”.

“I feel that the Supreme Court’s staff help things go smoothly; they generally understand my needs and meet them well”.

“Phenomenally efficient staff compared to other courts. Work on the same page, giving advice and support. The whole team are super helpful and friendly”.

“Efficient service, issues resolved quickly, partnership with staff .”

“These are the most important people in my professional life and provide a consistent continuity of service”.

“An efficient court and staff, nice dynamic. Courteous and patient staff”.

“Staff are friendly and helpful, there is a positive, open relationship. Staff have a useful breadth of knowledge. Helpful that faces remain unchanged – good staff retention”.

“Feel very well looked after at all times. Court liaison meetings are handled very well and are always non-threatening and open.”

“Everyone knows you at Elgin, it is a delight to visit”.