



**Scottish Criminal Cases
Review Commission**

**Annual Report
2024–25**

Overview

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers SG/2025/95

2024–25

213	New applications received
29	Applications accepted for stage 2 review
226	Cases concluded overall
40	Cases concluded after stage 2 review
3	Cases referred to the High Court

1 April 1999 to 31 March 2025

164	Cases referred to the High Court
151	Cases determined by the High Court
99	Convictions quashed/sentences reduced
52	Appeals unsuccessful
13	Appeals abandoned

Contents

Chair’s Foreword	04
Chief Executive’s Introduction	09
The Commission	13
Case Statistics	15
Referrals to the High Court	20
Post Office Cases	28
The Commission’s 25th Anniversary Seminar	31
Accountability	33
Performance Analysis	41
Our People	49

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission, setting out the work and performance of the Commission for the financial year 2024-25.

I took up my post as Chair on 1 January 2025, so I wish first to thank my predecessor, Bill Matthews, for his exceptional stewardship over the last eight years and for facilitating a seamless transition between Chairs. I also wish to thank former Board Members Raymond McMenamin and Elaine Noad (Elaine was Chair of our Audit Committee), whose tenure as Board Members ended in December 2024, for their service.



DR VANESSA DAVIES

We welcomed a new legal Board Member, Alyson Forbes. Alyson brings with her a wealth of experience as a Procurator Fiscal Depute and, latterly, as an Ad Hoc Advocate Depute. I know that she will prove to be an invaluable Member of our Board.

On 28 November the Commission hosted its 25th Anniversary Seminar. While I was not yet formally in post, I was able to attend the Seminar. It was important

to mark this significant milestone for the Commission, reflecting the part we have played in the criminal justice system in Scotland in the last quarter of a century.

Our esteemed speakers included the Lord Justice Clerk, Lord Beckett (as he now is), and the Chief Commissioner of Te Kāhui Tātari Ture (the New Zealand CCRC), Colin Carruthers KC. We welcomed many former Board Members and employees, as well as many friends of the Commission, with an invited audience of more than one hundred members of the legal profession and other stakeholders. While it provided an opportunity to look back briefly on past successes, the Seminar focused on where we are now, discussing topical matters in Scots criminal law, and how we can engage effectively with the legal profession.

This year the Board looked at the lessons that we can learn from the decision of the (English) Court of Appeal in *Malkinson v R* [2023] EWCA Crim 954 and the report by Chris Henley KC on the English Commission's handling of Mr Malkinson's case. The Board examined whether our case-review process provides the necessary checks to make sure that we investigate all cases to a high standard and that we identify potential miscarriages of justice. The Board remains confident that our case-review process, which involves the participation of multiple Board Members during the investigative stage of a review – Members assist and advise the Legal Officer to whom the case is allocated – is robust, as is our system of decision-making. Our decisions whether to refer a case to the High Court are taken by the full Board with the

input from our Consultant Legal Advisor KC. We are nevertheless committed to continuous improvement and in 2025-26 will conduct another of our periodic reviews of our case-handling procedures. One issue arising concerns the system of retention of forensic samples and key productions post-conviction. We have been engaging with the Crown Office about this issue with the purpose of achieving a situation in which the interests of those wrongly convicted of serious crime are adequately protected.

In March 2025 Dr Isla Callander, Senior Lecturer, School of Law at the University of Aberdeen, presented to the Board her research paper about recent appeals against criminal conviction. Dr Callander concluded therein that the Commission is both necessary and valuable. The Board was reassured by those conclusions, in what was an independent piece of research, illustrating the importance of the Commission's role. Subject to budgetary constraints, we shall look to take forward some new independent research, with the aim of measuring the effectiveness of our operation. Dr Callander's research about the nature of appeals accords with the nature of our own work: the statistics in this year's annual report show that the types of offences that we review are dominated by rape cases and other sexual offences.

We have adopted a trauma-informed approach to our work. In line with this, all staff undertook NHS Education for Scotland modules concerning trauma-informed practice, and all staff received training from a consultant clinical psychologist on trauma-informed practice and team resilience and wellbeing.

The Board approved a new three-year Corporate Plan, covering the period 2025–28, focusing on our core role as well as identifying how the Commission will align with the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework. From this, our new Business Plan includes agreed operational targets and objectives for the upcoming year. We shall be seeking a statutory order by the Cabinet Secretary of Justice which will allow us to archive in the National Records of Scotland our full Board minutes and the papers in our case reviews that we consider to be exceptional and therefore important for the national historical record.

I have had a busy six months as Chair, greatly assisted in my induction by the very high calibre and professionalism of our executive team. My colleagues have had a very busy 12 months, dealing with a record number of cases. Our staff have shown great resilience, and I thank them, and my fellow Board Members, for their commitment in pursuit of our statutory objectives.

Finally, it is with great sadness that we note the recent passing of Sir Gerald Henry Gordon CBE KC.

Sir Gerald was one of the original Commission Board Members and, latterly, our first Consultant Legal Advisor.

He was one of the most influential figures in Scottish criminal law and procedure in the last century and this one. He was the author of *The Criminal Law of Scotland* and the editor of the *Scottish Criminal Case Reports* and *Renton and*

Brown's Criminal Procedure, among the many other roles that he performed and the senior appointments that he held. He was Professor of Scots Law at Edinburgh University from 1972 until 1976. He served as a sheriff from 1976 to 1999 and as a temporary High Court Judge until 2004. He was knighted in 1999 and was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2002.

His contribution to the Commission was invaluable and is evident in the work that we continue to do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Davies', is displayed on a white rectangular background.

DR VANESSA DAVIES

Chair

25 September 2025

Chief Executive's Introduction

I reported last year that we had conducted our busiest year as regards the number of new applications received and cases concluded. We surpassed this in 2024-25, receiving 213 applications (177 in 2023-24) and concluding reviews in 226 cases (142 in 2023-24).

Of those 226 cases, 186 were rejected at stage 1 and 40 were concluded after a stage 2 review. Of those 40, three were referred to the High Court for determination and 11 people ultimately had their convictions quashed under operation of the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences (Scotland) Act 2024.

The High Court determined five appeals proceeding upon our referrals, four of which the court granted and one it refused.

The percentage of successful referral cases since our inception is 60 per cent. The percentage of successful conviction referrals in that 25-year period is 51 per cent (50 successes from a total of 98 conviction referrals).



MICHAEL WALKER

Regarding our work in the Post Office/Horizon cases, two more Commission referrals resulted in successful appeals, bringing the total number to eight. Our reviews in the Horizon cases ended with the coming into force of the 2024 Act, but we continued to liaise with the Scottish Government during the year to help them identify people affected by the legislation. In addition, we became aware of growing concerns about other Post Office computer systems which had been in operation before Horizon, including Capture accounting software. We obtained the details of 10 people whom the Post Office identified as potentially having been affected by Capture. We wrote to each of them, using tracing agents to obtain their current addresses where necessary, and encouraged them to apply to us. We did not receive any applications in response. We encourage anyone who believes that their criminal conviction might have been affected by Capture, or another Post Office system, to contact us.

Regarding our overall performance, I am pleased to report that we met all five of our case-related targets for the year. I acknowledge the ongoing dedication and hard work of our staff and Board Members, without whom this level of performance could not have been achieved.

We continue to demonstrate strong financial management and control, operating efficiently and effectively within the constraints of the financial resources allocated to us and within budget for the year. In 2024-25 our cash budget was set at £1,272,000. This represented an increase of 2.9 per cent on our budget for 2023-24.

During the year we examined our resilience and ability to deal with the ever-increasing case numbers. Based on this and a resultant resource-planning paper that we submitted to our sponsor team at the Scottish Government, funding for an additional legal officer position in 2025-26 was approved. The extra funding will enable us to maintain the 2025-26 case targets at their 2024-25 level and will assist us in reviewing our cases properly and timeously.

The percentage of applicants who are represented in FY 2024-25 remained stubbornly low at 17 per cent. There appear to be several reasons for this, but applicants tell us routinely that they have been unable to find a solicitor who is willing to accept their instructions in relation to making an application to us. Such responses reflect statistics reported elsewhere indicating the exodus of defence lawyers from the profession.

Of the 36 cases in 2024-25 where the applicant was represented, nine cases were accepted for a stage 2 review (25 %). Of the 177 cases where the applicant was not represented, 20 cases were accepted (11 %). There is, then, some evidence that an applicant is more likely to have their case accepted for a stage 2 review where they are represented. This is not a surprising finding. We have stated publicly that we believe that the input of defence solicitors and counsel is invaluable at the application stage given the knowledge that defence lawyers retain about the defence led and the trial proceedings. Our engagement strategy continues to focus on how we can engage as effectively as we can with the defence profession. We continue to assist unrepresented

applicants by talking them through the application process where required and by clarifying their grounds of review where those are unclear.

Of the cases rejected at stage 1 in 2024-25, almost half were rejected on the basis, or included the basis, that the applicant had not appealed. The High Court has told us that we must explain our reasons for referring any cases in which the normal appeal procedure has not been followed. Accordingly, in applying the interests of justice component of our statutory test, we do not generally accept a case for review unless the applicant has exhausted their right of appeal. However, we do accept cases for review (and did so in 2024-25), even if the normal appeal procedure had not been followed, where there are good reasons justifying this decision – where, for example, our powers of investigation were required to investigate an issue that arose in the case.

I shall finish my report this year by paying my personal thanks to Bill Matthews, whose eight-year tenure as Chairman of the Commission ended in December 2024. As Chairman, Bill steered the Commission through some complex challenges, including our reviews in the Post Office cases and our third review in the case of the man convicted of the murders of the passengers and crew on board Pan Am Flight 103 from London to New York, and residents of Lockerbie, on 21 December 1988. Bill was unflappable in this role, was extremely generous in support of his colleagues, and always offered sound advice.



MICHAEL WALKER

Chief Executive

25 September 2025

The Commission

13

OUR PURPOSE

To review potential miscarriages of justice in criminal cases in Scotland and refer appropriate cases to the High Court for an appeal.

The Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission was established in 1999 by Part XA of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 as an independent public body to review alleged miscarriages of justice in Scotland. The Commission has the power to refer cases to the High Court for determination.

Any person convicted of a criminal offence in Scotland may apply to the Commission to have their convictions and/or sentences reviewed. Thereafter the Commission has a statutory obligation to provide a statement of reasons for referring or not referring the case to the High Court.

In 2024-25 the Commission's staff complement was as follows: a Chief Executive, a Director of Corporate Services, two Senior Legal Officers, three Legal Officers and three Administration Staff. The Commission was successful in securing additional funding in 2025-26 to recruit an additional permanent Legal Officer and to provide for temporary absence cover.

Our Legal Officers investigate cases under the direction of Board Members and the Chief Executive. The Board is responsible for deciding whether cases should be referred to the High Court.

It is a criminal offence for any Member or employee to disclose information that the Commission obtained in the exercise of its functions, except under certain statutory exceptions.

Details of the Commission's remit, specific powers of investigation and case review procedures can be found on our website, sccrc.co.uk, or by request from our office.

Case Statistics

15

Case Statistics

Between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2025 the Commission received a total of 3476 applications, completed the review of 3420 cases and referred 164 cases to the High Court for determination.

The statistics about case numbers and case-related performance in 2024-25 are set out below. For context and where appropriate, the statistics for the four financial years preceding 2024-25 are also set out.

Table 1 provides the number of applications received in each of the last five years, the number accepted for a stage 2 review and the number of cases concluded.

Table 2 provides a comparison between solemn and summary cases in each of the last five years and between conviction cases (including conviction and sentence cases) and sentence-only cases.

Table 3 provides the principal offences of which applicants were convicted and their number in the last five years.

Table 4 provides the main grounds of review and their number in the last five years.

Table 1 • Cases Received and Concluded

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
CASES RECEIVED	107	98	139	177	213
CASES REJECTED AT STAGE 1	74	74	112	145	186
CASES ACCEPTED FOR STAGE 2 REVIEW	31	21	26	32	29
CASES CONCLUDED AFTER STAGE 2 REVIEW	19	28	26	27	40
CASES CONCLUDED OVERALL	93	102	138	142	226

Table 2 • Nature of Review

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
	%	%	%	%	%
SOLEMN	61	68	67	79	82
SUMMARY	39	32	33	21	18
CONVICTION (OR CONVICTION AND SENTENCE) REVIEW	86	90	92	94	96
SENTENCE-ONLY REVIEW	14	10	8	6	4

Table 3 • Types of Offence Reviewed

MAIN OFFENCE	NUMBER OF CASES	%
RAPE	239	32.6
SEXUAL OFFENCES OTHER THAN RAPE	125	17.0
MURDER	62	8.4
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	49	6.7
THREATENING OR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR	44	6.0
ASSAULT	39	5.3
CRIMES OF DISHONESTY	33	4.5
ATTEMPTED MURDER	22	3.0
ROAD TRAFFIC OFFENCES	18	2.5
DRUGS-RELATED OFFENCES	14	1.9
DOMESTIC ABUSE	12	1.5
CULPABLE HOMICIDE	2	0.3
OTHER	73	9.9

*Where an applicant was convicted of multiple charges on the same indictment or complaint, the table records only what the Commission has deemed to be the most serious charge of which the applicant was convicted (“Principal offence”). Where, for example, the principal offence is recorded as “Rape”, the table does not record whether the applicant was found guilty of more than one charge of rape and/or whether he was found guilty of lesser charge(s) alongside his conviction on the rape charge(s).

Table 4 • Grounds of Review Considered

MAIN GROUND OF REVIEW	NUMBER OF CASES	%
DEFECTIVE REPRESENTATION	264	36.0
CREDIBILITY OR RELIABILITY OF WITNESS OR EVIDENCE	198	27.0
UNFAIR TRIAL	83	11.3
SENTENCING ISSUE	74	10.1
FRESH EVIDENCE	37	5.0
MISDIRECTION	26	3.5
WRONGFUL CONVICTION	19	2.6
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE	10	1.4
POLICE MISCONDUCT	9	1.2
OTHER	141	19.2

*A total of 734 cases were received in the 5-year period. However, the total number of grounds of review exceeds this on account of multiple grounds being recorded against individual cases.

Referrals to the High Court

20

Referrals to the High Court

The Commission may refer to the High Court any conviction on indictment or summary complaint, or any sentence imposed in such a case, whether or not the High Court has previously determined an appeal against the conviction or sentence.

The Commission must, before it makes such a referral, believe that there may have been a miscarriage of justice and that it is in the interests of justice that a referral be made. Full details of the applicable legislation are available on the Commission's website, [sccrc.co.uk](https://www.sccrc.co.uk), or within the Commission's information leaflets, available upon request.

In 2024-25 the Commission referred two conviction cases and one sentence case to the High Court.

The referral rate in 2024-25 – ie, the number of referrals (3) expressed as a percentage of the total number of cases concluded, either at stage 1 or stage 2 (226) – was 1.3 %. In relation to the cases concluded after a stage 2 review (40), the referral rate was 7.5 %. In addition, 11 people in relation to those 40 cases ultimately had their convictions quashed under operation of the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences (Scotland) Act 2024.

The referral rate in the last five years – the number of referrals (20) expressed as a percentage of the total number of cases concluded (701) – was 2.9 %. The referral rate for stage 2 cases in the last five years was 14.2 % (20 referrals from 140 concluded stage 2 cases).

The overall referral rate – the total number of referrals between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2025 (164) expressed as a percentage of the total number of cases concluded (3420) – was 4.8 %. The overall referral rate for conviction cases was 2.9 %.

The success rate for appeals proceeding upon Commission referrals – the total number of successful appeals following upon Commission referrals (99) expressed as a percentage of the total number of Commission referrals (164) – was 60 %. The success rate for appeals in conviction cases was 51 % (50 successes from 98 conviction referrals).

Case Referral Details

Table 5 provides the main grounds of referral in the last five years.

Table 6 provides the number of referrals and the number of cases the High Court has determined in each of the last five years. (The cases the High Court has determined are not necessarily determined in the same year in which the Commission referred them.)

Table 7 provides details about the Commission’s referrals in 2024-25.

Table 8 provides details about the cases determined by the High Court in 2024-25 following upon a Commission referral.

Table 5 • Main Ground of Referral in last five years

MAIN GROUND OF REFERRAL	FREQUENCY OF GROUND	% OF REFERRED CASES
PLEA OF GUILTY TENDERED UNDER A REAL ERROR OR IN PREJUDICIAL CIRCUMSTANCES	8	40%
FRESH EVIDENCE	6	30 %
SENTENCING ISSUE	5	25 %
INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE	1	5 %

*Non-disclosure was a secondary ground for one of the cases.

**Oppression was a secondary ground for 8 of the Post Office cases.

Table 6 • Referrals and Disposals in last five years

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
CASES REFERRED	4	3	6	4	3
CASES DETERMINED	2	4	1	8	3
CASES ABANDONED	0	1	0	0	0

Table 7 • Cases Referred 2024-25

CONVICTION: 2 CASES	
NAME:	DARREN HUGHES
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	26 APRIL 2024
OFFENCE:	ATTEMPTED MURDER
DATE OF CONVICTION:	3 FEBRUARY 2022
APPEAL OUTCOME:	UNSUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	3 DECEMBER 2024
JUDGMENT:	HTTPS://WWW.SCOTCOURTS.GOV.UK/MEDIA/00NPPUWM/2024HCJAC48-APPEAL-BY-DARREN-HUGHES-AGAINST-HMA.PDF
CONVICTION: 1 CASE	
NAME:	AB
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	27 SEPTEMBER 2024
OFFENCE:	CONTRAVENTION OF SECTION 4(3)(B) OF THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1971
DATE OF CONVICTION:	15 NOVEMBER 2021
APPEAL OUTCOME:	SUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	20 NOVEMBER 2024
JUDGMENT:	NO WRITTEN JUDGMENT
SENTENCE: 1 CASE	
NAME:	DONGLIN ZHANG
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	26 APRIL 2024
OFFENCE:	HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND BROTHEL KEEPING
DATE OF CONVICTION:	13 SEPTEMBER 2022
APPEAL OUTCOME:	SUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	5 JULY 2024
JUDGMENT:	NO WRITTEN JUDGMENT

Table 8 • Cases Determined 2024-25

CONVICTION: 4 CASES	
NAME:	DARREN HUGHES
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	26 APRIL 2024
OFFENCE:	ATTEMPTED MURDER
DATE OF CONVICTION:	3 FEBRUARY 2022
APPEAL OUTCOME:	UNSUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	3 DECEMBER 2024
JUDGMENT:	HTTPS://WWW.SCOTCOURTS.GOV.UK/MEDIA/00NPPUWM/2024HCJAC48-APPEAL-BY-DARREN-HUGHES-AGAINST-HMA.PDF
NAME:	AB
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	27 SEPTEMBER 2024
OFFENCE:	CONTRAVENTION OF SECTION 4(3)(B) OF THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1971
DATE OF CONVICTION:	15 NOVEMBER 2021
APPEAL OUTCOME:	SUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	20 NOVEMBER 2024
JUDGMENT:	NO WRITTEN JUDGMENT
NAME:	RAVINDER SINGH NAGA
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	27 OCTOBER 2023
OFFENCE:	THEFT
DATE OF CONVICTION:	28 JANUARY 2010
APPEAL OUTCOME:	SUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	22 AUGUST 2024
JUDGMENT:	NO WRITTEN JUDGMENT

Table 8 • Cases Determined
2024-25
 (continued)

NAME:	JOANNE HUGHES ON BEHALF OF CAREN LORIMER (DECEASED)
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	26 JANUARY 2024
OFFENCE:	EMBEZZLEMENT
DATE OF CONVICTION:	3 AUGUST 2009
APPEAL OUTCOME:	SUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	29 MAY 2024
JUDGMENT:	NO WRITTEN JUDGMENT
SENTENCE: 1 CASE	
NAME:	DONGLIN ZHANG
DATE REFERRED TO COURT:	26 APRIL 2024
OFFENCE:	HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND BROTHEL KEEPING
DATE OF CONVICTION:	13 SEPTEMBER 2022
APPEAL OUTCOME:	SUCCESSFUL
DATE OF APPEAL OUTCOME:	5 JULY 2024
JUDGMENT:	NO WRITTEN JUDGMENT

Post Office Cases

28

Post Office Cases

The Commission reported last year on the work it had undertaken in relation to the Post Office/Horizon cases since receipt of its first applications in this class of cases in 2020. This year saw continued work for the Commission in this area.

The most recent of the appeals following upon the Commission's referrals in two Horizon cases were granted by the High Court in May and August 2024. The Commission has referred eight cases in total to the High Court for determination. The appeals in each of those cases was granted by the Court and the convictions of those individuals quashed.

In June 2024, following the coming into force of the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences (Scotland) Act 2024, the Commission's reviews in 11 cases came to an end. The convictions of each of those subpostmasters or employees of the Post Office or other businesses were confirmed by Scottish Ministers as having been quashed by operation of the legislation.

This year saw growing concerns about other computer systems which had been in operation in Post Office branches across the UK prior to Horizon, including Capture accounting software. In September 2024 the UK Government published an independent report on Capture by the risk management experts Kroll. Following that report, the Commission renewed its engagement with relevant stakeholders, including the UK and Scottish Governments, Crown Office and the Post Office. As it had done with the Horizon cases, the Commission obtained the details of individuals whom the Post Office, in reviewing its

investigation files, had identified as potentially having been affected by Capture. The Commission subsequently wrote to 10 people, using tracing agents to obtain their current details where necessary. The Commission encouraged them to apply if they had been affected by the issue. It did not receive any applications in response. It made contact again with the Post Office's strategic partners (large retailers that operated multiple Post Office branches in their stores), following upon the contact that the Commission previously had with those businesses.

The Commission continues to encourage anyone who believes that their criminal conviction, or that of a relative, might have been affected by Capture, or another Post Office system, to contact it.

The Commission's 25th Anniversary Seminar

31

On 28 November we hosted our 25th Anniversary Seminar.

It was important to mark this significant milestone for the Commission. In the last 25 years we have become an established part of the criminal justice system in Scotland. We have reviewed over 3400 cases and referred 164 cases (an average of 6.5 cases per year) to the High Court for determination.

A crucial feature of our composition is that our Board includes both senior lawyers and lay Members, who bring with them their own perspectives on the workings of the criminal justice system in Scotland. We have benefitted greatly from the knowledge and experience of highly qualified and committed Chairs, Board Members and Chief Executives, and we thank them all for their contributions during those 25 years.

The Seminar took the form of a live broadcast from our office in Glasgow, before an invited audience, both in person and online, of more than one hundred members of the legal profession and other stakeholders. Our speakers included the soon-to-be appointed Lord Justice Clerk, Lord Beckett, Colin Carruthers K.C., the Chief Commissioner of Te Kāhui Tātari Ture (the New Zealand CCRC), and Eamon Keane, Lecturer in Evidence and Criminal Procedure, University of Glasgow.

The Seminar focused on where we are now, discussing topical matters in Scots criminal law, and how we can engage effectively with the legal profession. The speakers from the Commission explained the work that we continue to undertake to cure potential miscarriages of justice and how the profession can, on behalf of their clients, engage with us. The feedback that we received, both from in-person and online attendees, was very positive.

Accountability

33

Accountability

The Commission seeks the highest levels of accountability in how it undertakes its core functions and delivers its services. It has several governance-related structures and processes to facilitate this, which are outlined below.

Best Value

The Commission is committed to the principles of Best Value and undertakes a full review against these principles at least every three years, in line with its corporate planning cycle. The last full review was approved by the Board on 31 March 2024 and a subsequent action plan was put in place.

Agreed actions are incorporated into the annual business plan objectives and progress is monitored by the Audit Committee and the Board. It is intended that all remaining actions from the current review will be implemented during 2025-26. Thereafter a new Best Value Review will be scheduled.

Engagement Strategy

The Commission's Engagement Strategy addresses the ways in which we can engage effectively with individual applicants, including prisoners, and with the legal profession.

The centrepiece of our engagement with the profession in 2024/25 was our 25th Anniversary Seminar.

As part of our objective to promote understanding of our role, we delivered talks to law students at the University of Strathclyde, the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh, and a talk to the Scottish Association for the Study of Offending.

We updated our position papers on the law of defective representation, disclosure, fresh evidence, guilty pleas, sufficiency and our own statutory test. The position papers (which are reviewed on a rolling basis) set out our understanding of the application of the current law in the respective areas. They are available on our website as a resource for applicants and their representatives.

In April 2024 we welcomed a delegation from a Norwegian Investigative Commission who examined our review process and procedures. In December 2024 we gave evidence to the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs at the Canadian Parliament in relation to the scrutiny of legislation creating a Canadian CCRC.

Independent Research

In March 2025 Dr Isla Callander, Senior Lecturer, School of Law at the University of Aberdeen, gave a presentation on her research paper entitled “Establishing a miscarriage of justice in Scotland: An analysis of 100 recent appeals against criminal conviction” to the Board. The paper provided an empirical analysis of appeals against criminal conviction in Scotland. A key

finding within the paper was that an appeal proceeding on a Commission referral is more than twice as likely to be successful than a direct appeal where it is heard by the appeal court. This finding showed, in Dr Callander’s view, the value of the Commission as a post-conviction review body, particularly given applicants to it have often already “failed” when bringing a direct appeal. Dr Callander concluded that the Commission is both necessary and valuable, as evidenced by the success rate of appeals the Commission refers relative to direct appeals and the clear role it plays in fresh evidence cases.

Complaints Procedure

The Commission has a formal Complaints Procedure (available on the website or upon request from the Commission). The Complaints Procedure is limited to administrative matters and does not cover complaints about the Commission’s case decisions.

In 2024-25 the Commission received one formal complaint (compared with two in 2023-24). The complaint was not upheld following full investigation.

Code of Conduct

The Commission has a Code of Conduct for Members and staff. In 2024-25 we reviewed and updated the Code of Conduct.

All Members and staff must declare any known conflicts of interest – where, for example, they have had previous involvement with an applicant or a witness in

a case. Conflicts are recorded, and the individual involved is excluded from any involvement in the respective case.

The Commission maintains a Register of Interests for Members (available on the website or for inspection at the office). All Members are required to review and update their registration on at least an annual basis.

Freedom of Information

The Commission has a Publication Scheme in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA). The Publication Scheme can be found at <https://sccrc.co.uk/publication-scheme>

In 2024-25 the Commission received 31 freedom of information (FOI) requests and issued a response in each case.

The responses issued were as follows:

full disclosure of information	16 cases
partial disclosure of information	6 cases
non-disclosure of information	19 cases

Where it did not disclose information, the Commission did not do so for one of the following reasons:

- the information was exempt from disclosure under FOISA
- the information was not held by the Commission
- the information was publicly available

One person asked the Scottish Information Commissioner (SIC) whether the Commission had complied with FOISA in responding to an FOI request they had made. The SIC found that the Commission had complied with FOISA. The decision of the SIC is reported here: <https://www.foi.scot/decision-2422024>

Data Protection

In 2024-25 the Commission received 16 subject access requests (SARs) under the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) for personal data and issued a response in each case.

The responses issued were as follows:

full disclosure of personal data	8 cases
partial disclosure of personal data	1 case
non-disclosure of personal data	7 cases

Where it did not disclose personal data, the Commission did not do so for one of the following reasons:

- the data was exempt from disclosure under DPA
- the data was not held by the Commission

One person complained to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) that the Commission had not provided a copy of all the personal information requested in response to their SAR and that the Commission had not provided a lawful basis for withholding the information. The ICO found that the Commission had complied with its data protection obligations.

The Commission reported one data breach to the ICO. The ICO considered the information provided, closed the case and provided the Commission with advice on the matter.

Persistent & Repeated Applications Policy

The Commission has a Persistent & Repeated Applications Policy to address repeat applications in which an applicant has raised no new grounds of review.

Where the relevant criteria in the Policy are met, the Chief Executive will place the applicant on the Commission's Persistent & Repeated Applications Register. The Chief Executive will notify the Board that he has done so.

An applicant may appeal the decision to place them on the Persistent & Repeated Applications Register. The Board will consider any such appeal.

Where it receives an application from a person who has been placed on the Register, the Commission addresses the application in accordance with the Policy.

The Commission reviews annually the registrations on the Persistent & Repeated Applications Register.

In 2024-25 the total number of registrations was 17 (compared with 19 in 2023-24) – two new registrations were made and four applicants were removed from the Register.

Legal Actions

In 2024-25 one judicial review application was raised against the Commission. Having regard to all the relevant circumstances, including the appropriate use of public funds, the Commission agreed to concede this action at the outset and to consider the point raised in the application.

In October 2022 one applicant (whose judicial action against the Commission had been unsuccessful) signed a debt-recovery agreement with the Commission in which he agreed to pay the full sum owed to the Commission, £23,749, over a three-year repayment period.

In 2024-25 the Commission did not incur any costs in respect of legal actions or debt recovery fees. A total of £7,916 was recovered in respect of the recovery agreement signed in October 2022; this compares with net income from this source in 2023-24 of £7,618.

Performance Analysis

41

Performance Analysis

Corporate Planning

The Commission's Corporate Plan, covering the period between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2025, was in place for the 2024-25 annual reporting cycle. This Corporate Plan set out the Commission's strategic aims and priorities for the three-year period and how the Commission intended to deliver those aims. It also identified how the Commission would align with the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and contains a three-year financial forecast.

A Business Plan, covering the period 2024-25, was also produced in support of the Corporate Plan. The Business Plan set out a full performance assessment for the preceding year and the operational objectives and agreed budgetary provision for the year ahead.

The Corporate Plan and Business Plan are available on the Commission's website, sccrc.co.uk, or by request from our office.

The key performance information contained in the Business Plan is detailed below. This includes the performance against all five key targets in 2024-25, a comparison of achievement against all key performance indicators in the last five years, and the financial results in 2024-25.

Performance Against Key Targets

The Commission's strategic aims, as agreed by the Scottish Ministers, were as follows:

- to identify, review and address potential miscarriages of justice, and thereby contribute to the strengthening of public confidence in the Scottish criminal justice system and its ability to correct such miscarriages;
- to investigate all cases efficiently, without undue delay and to a consistently high standard;
- to work with others to deliver a quality service which is person-centred and trauma-informed; and
- to promote public understanding of the Commission's role.

The Commission set specific objectives and targets to meet its broad aims and to demonstrate its commitment to the National Performance Framework. The Corporate Plan and the Business Plan identify those objectives and targets for 2024-25.

The Commission's performance against its key targets for 2024-25 is as follows:

TARGET	OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE
(i) to allocate cases received within an average of 1 month from the date of receipt.	Achieved*	0.3 month average *0.2 month average
(ii) to complete the stage 1 pre-acceptance procedure within an average of 3 months from the date of stage 1 allocation.	Achieved	2.1 month average *1.7 month average
(iii) to conclude sentence-only reviews within an average of 4 months of the date of stage 2 allocation.	Achieved**	2.9 month average *4.0 month average
(iv) to conclude cases involving a review of conviction within an average of 8 months of the date of stage 2 allocation.	Achieved	7.1 month average *7.2 month average
(v) to complete the review of 98% of the cases received before 31 March 2024, so that by the beginning of the 2025-26 reporting year no more than four of the Commission's cases are more than 12 months old.	Achieved	2 cases over 12 months old *0 cases over 12 months old

*2023-24 performance figures shown for comparison. The stage 1 allocation target was changed from within an average of 1 week in 2023-24 to within an average of 1 month in 2024-25. The prior year comparative figure has therefore been updated for consistency.

Full details of the Commission’s performance against those targets and objectives are available on the Commission’s website, [sccrc.co.uk](https://www.sccrc.co.uk).

The Commission achieved all five key targets in 2024-25, despite the significant increase in new applications and continued pressures on existing resources. Stage 1 allocation and review targets were adjusted to help manage the increase in business, although performance remains consistent with prior years.

Looking Forward

The Commission has also approved a new three-year Corporate Plan, covering the period between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2028. This is accompanied by the 2025-26 Business Plan, both of which are available on the Commission’s website, [sccrc.co.uk](https://www.sccrc.co.uk)

This Corporate Plan sets out the Commission’s new three-year focus, which covers the following key areas:

- Active Wider Role
- Engagement
- Environmental
- Inequalities
- Openness, Fairness and Transparency
- Research, Learning and Development
- Sustainability and Resilience
- Wellbeing

In addition, the Commission’s four strategic aims have been updated to provide additional clarity and focus.

Key Performance Indicators

The Commission sets several key performance indicators (KPIs), as identified within the Corporate Plan, and reports on those in the Annual Report. The table below sets out performance against the KPIs in each of the last five years:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Number of applications received	107	98	139	177	213
*Number of concluded cases	93	102	138	142	226
Average time taken from date of acceptance to date of conclusion	6.8 months	7.3 months	6.0 months	6.6 months	6.7 months
Number of cases where an initial decision not to refer is changed to a decision to refer following further submissions	0	0	0	1	0
Referrals	4	3	6	4	3
High Court determinations of appeals following Commission referral	1 granted 1 refused	1 granted	1 granted	7 granted 1 refused	4 granted 1 refused
Cases abandoned following upon a Commission referral	0	1	0	0	0
Number of formal complaints received	3	7	3	2	1
Number of cases subject to judicial review	2	2	0	0	1

*The number of concluded cases can exceed the number received in each year because cases received in previous financial years conclude in a subsequent year.

Financial Results

In accordance with paragraph 9(1)(b) of Schedule 9A to the 1995 Act, the Commission's statement of accounts covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The Commission's statement of accounts is prepared in accordance with the Accounts Direction issued to the Commission by the Scottish Ministers.

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 were signed off by the Accountable Officer on 27 August 2025 and have been published separately to the Annual Report. These are available on the Commission's website, [sccrc.co.uk](https://www.sccrc.co.uk)

The Commission's cash budget for 2024-25 was set at £1,272,000. No additional funding was sought during the year.

Comprehensive net expenditure for the year was £1,269k, which includes £144k of non-cash expenditure against a cash budget of £1,272k and a non-cash budget of £140k. Expenditure on investigations is inherently difficult to predict. The previous two years were significantly under budget, whereas in 2024-25 we exceeded budget on account of expert opinions required in several cases under stage 2 review. We did, however, make savings against legal costs as no expenditure was incurred during the year in respect of legal actions.

2024-25 Cash Budget:	£1,272,000			
2024-25 Non-Cash Budget:	£140,000			
Additional Funding:	0			

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
2024-25 Draw Downs	£351,500	£309,000	£300,000	£311,500

Total Funding Draw Down	£1,272,000			
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The capital budget for the year was set at £5k. Capital expenditure for the year amounted to £25k. This was a result of the timing of desktop replacements at the start of the year and necessary server and system upgrades during the year.

Payment Performance

In line with Scottish Government directions, the Commission's policy for the payment of invoices not in dispute is within 10 days of receipt (or the agreed contractual terms if otherwise specified). The Commission aims to pay 100 % of invoices, including disputed invoices once the dispute has been settled, within these terms.

The Scottish Government implemented its new Oracle Cloud finance system during 2024-25 as a replacement for SEAS. The new system incorporates HR and payroll functionality. The resource implications of those changes have been significant on the Commission, and full rollout is ongoing. With regard to supplier payments, a flexible approach has continued throughout this transition period, whereby reliance has been placed on BACS payments, subsequently journaled through SEAS/Oracle Cloud.

As at 31 March 2025 the value of supplier payments outstanding at year end was nil.

Our People

49

Our People

The Board

The Board has corporate responsibility for making sure the Commission fulfils the aims and objectives that the Scottish Ministers set the Commission and for promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources in accordance with the principles of Best Value. Members are appointed by Royal Warrant following open competition managed by Scottish Government Public Appointments.

The Board has executive responsibility in discharging its statutory role by making decisions in cases that the Commission receives. Two Case Committees, the Audit Committee and the Remuneration Committee support the Board. The Board sits twice a year as the Policy Group.

The Commission's Board is made up of an equal split of legal and lay Members, bringing a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to the decision-making process. Lay Members currently have backgrounds in public bodies and corporate governance, forensic psychiatry, police practice and procedure, journalism, research and access to justice.

The Commission has exceeded its 50:50 gender equality target on its Board.

		START DATE:	FINISH DATE:
Chairman:	Dr Vanessa Davies	01.01.25	-
	Mr Bill Matthews	01.01.17	31.12.24
Board Members:	Dr Alex Quinn	01.04.19	-
	Mrs Laura Reilly*	01.04.19	-
	Mrs Gillian Mawdsley	01.07.21	-
	Ms Jacqueline Fordyce	01.07.21	-
	Mrs Suzanne Mertes*	01.10.23	-
	Mr Finlay Young*	01.04.24	-
	Miss Alyson Forbes	01.01.25	-
	Mrs Elaine Noad*	01.01.17	31.12.24
	Mr Raymond McMenamin	01.01.17	31.12.24

*Audit Committee Members

AS AT 31 MARCH 2025	MALE	FEMALE
Chair	-	1
Board Members	2	5

Staffing

The Commission's Chief Executive, Mr Michael Walker, is the Accountable Officer and was supported by the following staff complement as at 31 March 2025:

JOB TITLE:	MALE	FEMALE
Director of Corporate Services	1	-
Senior Legal Officer	1	1
Legal Officer	1	2
Senior Administration Officer	-	1
Administration Officer	-	1

All staff are based at the Commission's office, in Glasgow, although the Commission operates hybrid working arrangements.

Absence Monitoring

The Commission has monitoring arrangements to review staffing performance issues such as rates of absence. The average number of sick days per employee in post in 2024-25 was 1.1 days. This is a reduction on the 2023-24 average of 1.7 days per employee in post and continues to represent an extremely low level of staff sick absence rate.

Training & Development

The Commission is committed to having well-trained staff. All staff are encouraged to identify and attend suitable training events and have direct access to the Chief Executive and Members, and they are encouraged to express their views on the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Commission. In June 2024 all staff received data protection training from our data protection officer. In January 2025 all legal staff, as part of their continued professional development, received training from a forensic scientist at the Centre for Forensic Science at Strathclyde University on the subject of novel technologies in DNA testing.

In line with our adopting a trauma-informed approach to our work, all staff undertook the NHS Education for Scotland Trauma Informed Justice Module 1 (Foundation knowledge for working with victims and witnesses) and Module 2 (Developing skills for working with victims and witnesses). Follow-up discussions were held with all staff to reflect collectively on the principles of trauma-informed practice and the potential re-traumatisation of the Commission's service users. In March 2025 all staff received training from a consultant clinical psychologist on trauma-informed practice, team resilience and wellbeing. One member of staff completed a certified course to qualify as a trauma-informed lawyer.

Performance Management

The Commission has a Staff Appraisal and Performance Policy. This sets out the Commission's commitment to staff training and development in terms of their current role and wider career aspirations, as well as the link between performance

and reward. The Commission is also bound by the Scottish Government's Pay Policy, which is reviewed annually as part of the development and approval of the annual pay remit. The Commission's Board also sits as the Remuneration Committee and oversees the application of the Pay Policy, with all subsequent pay proposals requiring Scottish Government approval.

Equal Opportunities & Diversity

The Commission has an Equal Opportunities Policy. This is to make sure that there is no employment discrimination on the grounds of disability and that access to employment and career development with the Commission is based solely on ability, qualifications and suitability for the work.

Equalities data is gathered on an annual basis from employees to assist the Commission in identifying and addressing any actual or perceived equality or diversity issues, in accordance with the Commission's Equality Duty Mainstreaming Report. The Mainstreaming Report includes any agreed actions and is published on the Commission's website.

Health & Safety

The Commission has a Health & Safety Policy. This forms part of the Staff Handbook and sets out our responsibilities for the staff's health and safety. Several related policies and procedures, covering issues such as fire safety and staff travel etc, support it. The Commission's Health & Safety Officer monitors the Policy, and she reports to a bi-annual meeting which the Accountable

Officer, the Director of Corporate Services and the Environmental Officer attend. An update is provided directly to the Board after each bi-annual meeting.

Environmental Matters

In 2024-25 the Commission continued to monitor compliance with its Environmental Policy and performance of its Environmental Action Plan. The Commission's work in this area demonstrates its ongoing commitment to the reduction of its environmental impact, to adapt to the changing climate, and to act sustainably. Ongoing policy commitments include:

- to reduce energy and minimise waste, paper and water consumption;
- to minimise the impact of the Commission's travel arrangements on the environment;
- to purchase products and services with regard to environmental impact; and
- to ensure Board Members and staff are aware of and are committed to the Commission's duties in relation to the climate and biodiversity.

Details of the Commission's Environmental Policy and Action Plan are available on the website: [sccrc.co.uk](https://www.sccrc.co.uk)

Commission Policies

Our policies are reviewed on a three-year cycle. Our information governance policies are reviewed annually.



Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission

Annual Report
2024–25

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