



Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service Mainstreaming Equality Report 2019

(Including Progress Report on Equality Outcomes 2015-19 and the set of new Equality Outcomes 2019-23)



The SCTS is a member of, or accredited by, the above initiatives in support of its equality aims and outcomes.

Purpose

Section 3 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 ('the Regulations') states that public authorities require to publish a report on the progress that they have made to make equality integral to the exercise of their functions. Mainstreaming reports must be published at intervals of no more than two years.

Section 4(4) of the Regulations states that listed authorities must report on their progress in achieving their previously published equality outcomes. [The previous report](#) was published in April 2017, so this report must be published no later than 30th April 2019.

Foreword from the Chief Executive



This Mainstreaming Report covers the period 2017-19 and projects our plans for the next four years of our continuous work to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion within the SCTS.

All the work we do is underpinned by our core values of Respect, Service and Excellence. Our vision is to build a Stronger Courts and Tribunals Service focused on providing access to justice, maximising the benefits of technology and improving the service we provide to all users.

We have made significant progress over the course of the past two years towards fulfilling our equality outcomes that were established in 2015. In some areas, however, there is still much to do to reach our goal of making the SCTS an even more inclusive and diverse organisation. We have accordingly put much thought into our new Equality Outcomes for the period 2019-23. We have also taken the opportunity to incorporate actions in relation to the recommendations of our [BSL Plan](#), which was published in October 2018, into these new outcomes.

The work portrayed in this report, and that which will be required to deliver our new Equality Outcomes, is of course only possible through the passion and commitment of our staff who continue to improve the quality of our service, by ensuring we focus on the individual needs of those who rely on the Scottish justice system. This work is supported by our continuous commitment to provide an inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued for who they are regardless of their age, religion or belief, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding, sexual orientation or gender identity.

We are once again indebted to the members of our Equality Advisory Group who continue to provide wise counsel and help us ensure that our proposals and actions are compatible with the needs of Scotland's increasingly diverse population.

I am looking forward to pursuing these new actions and I believe that with our continuous and growing commitment to equality and inclusion we can make a significant difference for those who work for SCTS and for those who require to use the services of the courts, tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian.

Eric McQueen,
Equality Champion
Chief Executive SCTS

Foreword from the Chair of the SCTS Equality Advisory Group



As Chair of the Equality Advisory Group (EAG) I am pleased to provide a foreword for the SCTS Mainstreaming Report 2019.

The membership of the EAG has changed over the last couple of years with new members coming on board and I thank them for their commitment in being 'critical friends' to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) in working towards addressing equalities within the organisation.

Having been involved with the EAG for a number of years I have seen a genuine commitment from the senior management team and many dedicated staff - all of whom have valued the specialist equalities input that the EAG provides to the organisation. Commitment has also been shown through the appointment of Katarzyna Zduniak as Equality and Diversity Manager, which is an important post in helping to co-ordinate and implement equalities within the organisation.

There are 3 themes within the SCTS Mainstreaming Report 2019:

- (1) Promoting awareness and understanding of equality and diversity within the organisation;
- (2) Improving accessibility of SCTS services;
- (3) Improving accessibility to employment within SCTS.

A number of actions have been attached to the key themes and the EAG will in the coming years look to provide SCTS with guidance and where possible, support in the implementation and monitoring of the actions. There are some outcomes from the previous Mainstreaming Report that has yet to be achieved, such as the increase in ethnic minorities within the SCTS workforce, and so this area of work I am sure SCTS will look to continue and include in the actions within the Mainstreaming Report 2019.

SCTS has been on a continuous journey over the years in working towards improving its approach to equalities and I am sure that other EAG members share my commitment in continuing this journey with SCTS to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for people that access SCTS services and for people that work within the organisation.

Colin Lee

Chief Executive

Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO) Scotland

1. Our Approach to Equality Duty	Page 6
2. Embedding Equality within the SCTS	
• People Strategy	Page 8
• The Fair Work agreement	Page 9
• Well-Being Initiative and Mental Health Awareness	Page 10
• Policy package	Page 12
• Carers' Policy and Conference	Page 13
• Staff Equality Engagement Network	Page 15
• Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion - Silver Award	Page 15
• British Sign Language (BSL) Plan	Page 16
• SCTS User Satisfaction Surveys	Page 17
• Customer Service Excellence	Page 18
• Fairer Scotland Duty	Page 18
• Promoting Diversity in Board Membership	Page 19
3. Embedding Equality within the Criminal Justice System	
• Criminal Justice Disability Project	Page 21
• Pride in Justice Network	Page 22
• 16 Days of Action	Page 22
• BSL framework	Page 22
4. Equality Outcomes	
4.1 Equality Outcomes 2015-2019	
• Equality Outcome 1 - LGBT employees will have confidence in the SCTS as an employer	Page 23
• Equality Outcome 2 - The SCTS workforce will be more reflective of those in the Scottish population particularly in relation to BME members	Page 25
• Equality Outcome 3 - We will increase the confidence of our staff to declare their protected characteristics	Page 26
• Equality Outcome 4 - We will aim to make the SCTS workforce more reflective of those in the Scottish population particularly in relation to young people	Page 27

- Equality Outcome 5 - We will strive to increase civic participation for people with protected characteristics Page 30
- Equality Outcome 6 - We will improve the quality of information held by SCTS in relation to services provided to child and other vulnerable witness Page 32

4.2 Equality Outcomes 2019-2023

- Equality Outcome 1 - We will promote awareness and understanding of equality and diversity within our organisation Page 33
- Equality Outcome 2 - We will improve the accessibility of our services Page 33
- Equality Outcome 3 - We will improve accessibility to our employment Page 34

5. Going forward

- Civil Online Page 35
- Children and Vulnerable Witness Centre Page 35

6. Involving Others

Page 37

7. Other Languages/Formats

Page 38

1. Our Approach to Equality Duty

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) aims to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to carry out the equality duties specified within the Act.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the **general duties** to which public authorities must have due regard. They need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The **protected characteristics** covered are:

- Age
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 ('the Regulations') impose **specific duties** to:

- report progress on mainstreaming the general equality duty

We produce our [Equality Mainstreaming Report](#) biennially detailing how we have met our outcomes and the improvements we have made within that period.

- publish equality outcomes and report progress

We produce a new set of equality outcomes every four years identifying specific, measurable and realistic objectives in an [action plan](#), and report on progress biennially.

- assess new or revised policies and practices

We aim to carry out equality impact assessments on any new or amended policies and practices which will ensure that protected characteristics are taken into consideration.

- review existing policies and practices

We aim to review policies and practices on a regular basis in order to make sure that they reflect the changing landscape and this is and will be done in consultation with the PCS Union and a number of external organisations who provide specialised advice.

- gather, use and publish employee information

We produce an annual [People Scorecard](#) which contains data on the breakdown of the SCTS workforce, recruitment activity, learning and development and average salaries.

- publish gender pay gap information

The SCTS published its first [Gender Pay Gap report](#) in 2018 and is required by law to publish it on an annual basis. This year's [report](#) was published on 29th March 2019.

- publish an equal pay statement

The 2019 Equal Pay Policy statement is being drafted and will be published on the SCTS website in October 2019.

- consider award criteria and contract conditions in relation to public procurement.

The SCTS complies with all relevant equality legislation during the procurement process. Moreover a non-discrimination clause is included in the SCTS's terms and conditions of contract.

2. Embedding Equality within the SCTS

We strive to make the SCTS a diverse place to work by empowering staff to take responsibility for the development of equality and inclusion in the workplace.

In the [Equality Mainstreaming Report](#), which was published in April 2017, we have presented a number of measures that are taken within the SCTS to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion. In this document we will only report on the one that has been progressed within the last two years and the new initiatives that have been introduced since the previous report in April 2017.

People Strategy

The [SCTS People Strategy 2018-2023](#) was published in February 2018. It was developed following activities including Staff Engagement Events held throughout the SCTS in 2016 and workshops with Directors, senior managers, PCS Union representatives and members of the SCTS People Committee. The Strategy links to Strategic Priority 3 of our [Corporate Plan 2017-2020](#) “Skilled and Motivated People” and in order to shape its content a number of resources were used: information from staff survey responses; [the Customer Service Excellence Assessment](#); results from the SCTS Court User Satisfaction Surveys 2013-2017, and other surveys conducted by the Office of the Public Guardian and tribunal jurisdictions, the Annual People Scorecard 2016-17, the SCTS Values and Behaviours and the Corporate Plan 2017-2020.

The Strategy covers the five year period from 2018 - 2023 and focuses on four key themes:

- **Valuing Everyone’s Contribution:** we respect and value each individual – hearing their voice as part of their local team and the wider SCTS team;
- **Our Team:** we have the right people, in the right place, at the right time with the skills and behaviours to succeed;
- **Learning:** we learn in all we do, to perform in the present and prepare for the future;
- **Realising Potential:** we develop our people, as they develop the organisation.

In order to achieve those we made sure that there are specific actions attached to each theme – for example:

- To review our reward framework;
- To develop a flexible and modern e-recruitment system;
- To provide a broad range of learning and development opportunities;
- To help employees to define their own career journey.

Whilst the HR function will play a key role in delivering the various activities, the Strategy is owned and delivered throughout the SCTS. Success will require leaders, managers and employees to support the key themes and actions. Collaborative working, in partnership with PCS Union colleagues, will be essential.

The Fair Work agreement

In November 2018 Mr Derek Mackay, Cabinet Secretary for Finance Economy and Fair Work, signed a Fair Work Agreement with Civil Service Trade Unions confirming Fair Work principles which apply across Civil Service bodies in the Scottish Administration.

SCTS has signed up to this Fair Work agreement that includes measures to guarantee a living wage for employees, respect for the right of unions to engage in legal industrial action, the development of 'modern apprenticeships', and clampdown on excessive hours along with a commitment to flexible work.

The SCTS already benefits from very successful partnership working, with local partnerships helping to discuss and resolve issues which affect staff day to day. In addition to working in partnership on a variety of strategic and operational people matters our SCTS PCS Branch Chair, Rosemarie Smith, and SCTS PCS Branch Secretary, Brian Carroll, attend our People Committee, which focuses on ensuring people issues are at the heart of what we do. We are already recognised as an accredited living wage employer and successfully employed a third group of Modern Apprentices in 2018. We promote flexible working whenever possible and our wellbeing approach helps underline the importance of achieving work/life balance.

A copy of the agreement can be found here - [Fair Work Agreement](#).

Well-Being Initiative and Mental Health Awareness

The SCTS Wellbeing Initiative seeks to ensure that our people have the support they need to deal with often challenging work and creating a more open and supportive culture. Our vision is to “Support everyone to be their best”. We want to support everyone to be able to function to maximum capacity in a supportive environment, without prejudice or discrimination, in balance with the needs of the SCTS. We recognise that the mental health of employees is crucial to how they feel about their jobs, perform in their role, and interact with colleagues and service users.

Employees with good mental health are more likely to perform their roles at a higher level, have good attendance levels, be more energised and engaged, and be better at motivating their colleagues.

Stigma is the main reason that people struggling with their mental health delay seeking help. Speaking about mental ill health will help to reduce the stigma.

Our Wellbeing Initiative aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental ill health and encourage a supportive environment by:

Supporting all employees with mental health issues.

Promoting the support that is available internally and externally.

Encouraging people to share.

Accessing help and support at the right time.

Knowledge – raising awareness through training and on-going dialogue.

Bespoke **Mental Health Awareness Training for Line Managers** was launched in early 2018. It is facilitated by Help EAP (our external Employee Assistance Programme). The objectives of this workshop are to:

- Understand the causal factors of mental ill health;
- Appreciate employers' legal duties regarding mental health and wellbeing;
- Recognise the signs of mental ill health;
- Know how to take appropriate action as a manager;
- Have confident conversations about mental health;
- Demonstrate and apply your skills working with real life scenarios.

Over 250 line managers completed this course in 2018 and a number of new dates will soon be arranged on which the rest of our line managers will be trained in mental health awareness to better support themselves and their teams and feel able to act confidently as the first point of support. The feedback from the attendees on the training has been very positive. See *Me*, the mental health charity, have also commented favourably on our training package.

In 2018 we also commenced a pilot programme of our **Mental Health Awareness eLearning** package. This is another way in which we will raise awareness about mental health and create an open and supportive organisational culture.

The programme is called Headtorch WORKS. It is a blended learning programme consisting of bite size chunks - 3 online episodes and 3 face to face discussions in groups of 4-10 people over 3-9 weeks. It has a number of different learning methods – video footage, interactive questions and discussion groups. It is participative and interactive. It was compiled in collaboration with the University of Glasgow and has been used successfully by a number of organisations.

Key objectives of this course are to:

- Understand the impact of our behaviours, attitude and empathy on mental health;
- Learn how to spot signs of mental ill health;
- Learn how to have a supportive conversation about mental health;
- Understand how to signpost colleagues towards support options.

So far 55 out of 100 people due to take part in the pilot are either in the process of completing the course or have completed this training. The aim of the pilot is to obtain feedback on the training from participants and also to test how we could feasibly run such training throughout the SCTS.

The SCTS is committed to further improvement in this area and therefore a comprehensive **Mental Health Strategy** for the SCTS is also currently under development. This will incorporate advice from various organisations including ACAS, Mind, See Me and Business in the Community.

As a part of our Wellbeing Initiative a **Work and Wellbeing Passport** (“passport”) has been developed to form the basis of discussions between line managers and employees to explain and record the impact of personal circumstances on them at work. It is designed to complement HR policies such as, for example, Special Leave, Flexible Working, Attendance

Management, Carers Policy, and Transgender – Transitioning at Work. It is intended to work in tandem with these policies and does not replace them. The passport is intended to be used for a variety of personal circumstances, not just mental health issues. The final version of the passport and supporting guidance documents were agreed with the Wellbeing Project Team, PCS Union, HRU and following a series of workshops with members of staff. See Me, the mental health charity have also endorsed the passport for use in meetings that involved mental health, stating: *“It is great to see your Work and Wellbeing Passport and how you intend to use it to support conversations between managers and staff as we often find that managers are worried about opening up conversations as they do not feel equipped to effectively support staff.”* General guidelines regarding the storage of personal information by line managers is under development to complement the new GDPR regulation following which the passport will be launched.

The SCTS **Trauma Support Service** is also now in place and ready to be launched. The Wellbeing Initiative Project Manager has written the Strengthening Resilience course together with our EAP provider, taking on board the feedback from the Trauma Support Focus Group. The aim of this course is to proactively strengthen the resilience for certain frontline operational court roles that we recognise may need additional support in recognition of the particular challenges of their roles. The pilot of this training course will take place in May 2019. It will consist of two half day workshops attended by the volunteers from frontline operational civil and criminal court roles.

Wellbeing is due to become a standing agenda item for all meetings across the SCTS. **The Wellbeing Toolkit for Line Managers** to ensure that wellbeing is promoted in general is now in place and briefing materials are being drafted to ensure that wellbeing becomes part of our everyday conversation in one-to-one meetings, team meetings and corporate governance to create an open and supportive organisational culture.

Policy package

The SCTS has a comprehensive package of policies and guidance that support mainstreaming equality and inclusion in the organisation. An audit process ensures that policies are continuously up to date with regard to legislation, inclusive language and all other changes in the approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. In addition to reviewing existing policies we ensure that we take into account best practice and develop new policies when this is required by employment legislation. For example, we revised the SCTS Parent Guide to include Shared Parental Leave following the introduction of The Shared Parental Leave Regulation 2014. The SCTS is also proactive in its work in order to make sure that it continues to be a diverse and

inclusive employer. We are committed to providing an inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued for who they are regardless of their age, religion or belief, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding, sexual orientation or gender identity. In 2017 we created our Transgender - Transitioning at Work Policy, which outlines the support available to anyone going through the process of transitioning, as well as information on managing the process at work. Guidance documents have also been published, for both managers and trans staff, which provides further in depth information to help navigate the process at work. This policy involved consultation with:

- internal groups:
 - the Equality Steering Group (chaired by the CEO Eric McQueen, who is the Equality Champion);
 - the Staff Equality Engagement Network (SEEN) and
 - Public and Commercial Service Union (PCS);

- external groups:
 - the SCTS Equality Advisory Group (EAG), which consists of a number of equality organisations and acts as a 'critical friend' to the SCTS by providing advice on new and existing policies and procedures;
 - interested stakeholders - Stonewall and Trans Alliance.

An Equality Impact Assessment was also created and published together with the policy. Additionally one of the roles of the Equality and Diversity Manager is to review the policies and ensure that their language is inclusive. This is an ongoing process conducted as a part of the work to embed equality in the organisation.

Carers' Policy and Conference

The SCTS is committed to helping staff balance demands of work and home life. It is important that all levels of management play their part in creating an environment in which staff can meet their responsibilities at work while being supported in managing their caring responsibilities.

Our definition of a carer is someone who looks after a partner, child, relative or friend who cannot manage without help because they are physically or mentally ill, frail or disabled. The carer may or may not live with the person they are caring for.

Staff members who are carers can apply to be on the SCTS Carer Register. Access to the register offers the following benefits:

- Respite Care Scheme;
- interest free loans up to a maximum of £5,000 for the purchase of specialised equipment;
- where possible, purchase discounts for specialised equipment if the purchase can be made by the SCTS;
- access to a mobile phone package to support contact with the individual being cared for;
- additional relocation support to meet the cost of home adaptations, where appropriate;
- the production of a separate report by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in cases where a compulsory transfer option is being considered.

In 2018 the SCTS Carers Advisory Group was re-launched to widen the scope of the Carers Contact Team (CCT) and new Terms of Reference were approved. The aim of the group is to support the work of the CCT, which consists of past or present carers, appropriately trained, who have agreed to be a point of contact for staff with caring responsibilities. The group will strive to raise awareness among staff of the policies and support available to assist carers with their caring responsibilities. The group will seek to benchmark its achievements and promote SCTS as a carer positive organisation. The SCTS Carer Advisory Group, which meets quarterly, comprises the CCT, the Equality and Diversity Manager, other operational staff, HR representatives and PCS Union representatives.

The SCTS also hosts a biennial carers' conference which is an opportunity for SCTS carers to get together and discuss experiences and issues. The 2018 SCTS carers' conference, on the theme of Wellbeing, was organised by our Carers Advisory Group and took place on 23rd November. Feedback from the event has formed the basis of an action plan to continue to deliver support to carers with work targeted at increasing visibility of the Carers Advisory Group through the delivery of roadshows and by reviewing opportunities to engage with staff with caring responsibilities.

Staff Equality Engagement Network

The Staff Equality Engagement Network (SEEN) is the new name for the Protected Characteristics Staff Group (PCSG) which was established in 2014 when we amalgamated the Staff Disability Group and the LGBT Staff Network. The purpose of SEEN is to provide SCTS with an in-house staff group which can advise the organisation and its staff and service users on issues concerning protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The scope of the group is to monitor organisational and staff attitudes to equality issues and highlight trends, and help share best employment practice for staff with protected characteristics.

In December 2018, the opportunity was taken to restructure SEEN as a virtual network via the **Equality Hub** which is located on the staff forum pages. This enables SEEN members to participate more fully and not be restricted in attending regular meetings due to other operational pressures. We encourage all staff to visit the Equality Hub and learn about various aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion. In order to make staff involvement more manageable, and to enable them to play to their strengths, the members were asked to identify one objective for the year. This could be a one-off activity like organisation of an event during one of the awareness days, or longer term participation as an 'ambassador' for a particular protected characteristic. In February 2019 members of the SEEN organised two significant events: Equal-Tea on Purple Friday in Aberdeen Sheriff Court and in Glasgow Sheriff Court staff were encouraged to sign the #NoBystanders pledge to show their support to stand up to hateful language and abuse both at work and in the community and support everyone who may experience bullying or harassment because of their protected characteristics (no matter what those may be). The membership of the network is increasing.

Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion - Silver Award

The SCTS has won the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei) Silver Award in the organisation's annual awards in the first year of joining the scheme, by scoring a rating of 75% across the eight categories measured: Workforce; Strategy and Planning; Leadership and Accountability; Recruitment and Attraction; Training and Development; Other Employment Practices; Communication and Engagement; and Procurement. enei is the leading employer network promoting equality and inclusion in the workplace; seeks to influence government, business and trades unions; and campaigns for real practical change in equality and inclusion. The SCTS was ranked 15th out of the 67 organisations across the UK. The service scored particularly well in the Strategy, Leadership, Employment Practices and Communication categories. Katarzyna Zduniak, Equality and Diversity Manager said: *"We have only been a*

member of enei for one year and to be recognised for our excellence in diversity and inclusion practices is a great achievement. Membership of enei will allow SCTS to further develop and be a more inclusive employer and continue the hard work of mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion.”

British Sign Language Plan

The SCTS is obliged under section 2 of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 to publish a Plan in which it sets out measures it will take for the use of British Sign Language (BSL) in connection with the exercise of its functions. The SCTS BSL Plan had to be published within 12 months of [the British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan](#), which was published on 24th October 2017. Following consultation, [the SCTS BSL Plan](#) was published in October 2018 and the BSL video which contains this plan can be viewed via this link - [BSL video](#).

The Plan supports commitments in [the British Sign Language \(BSL\) National Plan](#) published by Scottish Government and sets out the actions SCTS intends to take to promote BSL and support BSL users¹ (including tactile BSL) over the period from 2018 to 2024.

Though SCTS is the only justice agency required to compile its own plan, we are working closely with other justice partners to support the National Plan long-term goals of “Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users” and “BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland.” This will include the establishment of a BSL-led justice advisory group to provide expertise and guidance to justice agencies that will play a key role in developing and delivering a programme of improvements over the 6 year period.

In addition to forming a BSL-led justice advisory group with other agencies SCTS will:

- Work with BSL users and support organisations to identify gaps in service provision;
- Work with specialised providers to introduce video remote interpreting services at public counters to facilitate general enquiries, payment of financial penalties, etc. A Stage Zero report will be compiled for the purposes of a pilot in bigger courts in the first instance;
- Promote the use of [‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’](#) for telephone communications and develop the accessibility of general information and the SCTS website;

¹ Wherever we refer to ‘BSL users’ we mean D/deaf and/or Deafblind people (those who receive the language in a tactile form due to sight loss) whose first or preferred language is British Sign Language.

- Take part and support the filming of a court procedure video that will be used as a tool during training for court BSL/English interpreters by Queen Margaret University;
- Improve access to employment in SCTS for BSL users (preparatory discussions ongoing with the Human Recourses Unit);
- Take regular opportunities to engage with BSL led organisations for the provision of BSL awareness training for SCTS staff.

These actions are incorporated in more detail within the SCTS Equality Outcomes and Action Plan for years 2019 - 2023, discussed later in this report.

SCTS User Satisfaction Surveys

The SCTS runs Court User Satisfaction Surveys every second year to capture court users' views on various aspects of service provision including staff, facilities and waiting times. Whilst there are no specific questions about protected characteristics other than in a demographics section, reasons for dissatisfaction are probed. To date very few responses have specifically referenced protected characteristics other than in relation to accessibility issues in some locations.

Overall satisfaction ratings from the last three surveys have been 89% in 2013, 89% in 2015 and 92% in 2017. The survey results are reported to the SCTS Board and published on [the SCTS website](#).

The Office of the Public Guardian carries out short targeted surveys with different customer groups, usually in order to assess satisfaction with recent changes made to service provision. Some of the Tribunal jurisdictions have also developed short user surveys, mostly to test user satisfaction with administrative processes. The SCTS is dedicated to constantly improving accessibility to its services and the feedback from these surveys is of great value to that exercise.

Customer Service Excellence

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is an externally-accredited standard involving assessment against 57 elements, some of which are directly relevant to equality and diversity:

- “we make particular efforts to identify hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed our services in response to their specific needs” (rated compliance plus 2016-18);
- “we ensure that all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is confirmed by feedback and the measurement of customer experience” (rated fully compliant 2016-18);
- “we provide our customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels” (rated fully compliant 2016-18).

[The 2018 assessment](#) concluded with the SCTS achieving 42 ‘fully compliant’ ratings, 13 ‘compliance plus’ ratings and two ‘partially compliant’ ratings.

Fairer Scotland Duty

The “socio-economic duty” was included as a provision in the UK Government’s Equality Act of 2010 but was never commenced at UK level due to a change in Westminster administrations. The power to commence the duty was devolved to Scotland in line with one of the Smith Commission recommendations. The Scottish Government implemented the duty with effect from 1 April 2018. The duty, which is now known as the “*Fairer Scotland Duty*”, is one of a number of complementary duties placed on the public sector to tackle socio-economic disadvantage, child poverty, equality of opportunity and inequality of outcome. Socio-economic disadvantage can be defined as living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society and can include low income and living in a deprived area. The duty requires relevant public authorities to do more to tackle inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, by ensuring their strategic decision making takes account of those experiencing it.

SCTS was not initially listed as a public body to whom the duty should apply however, as a significant employer and a key part of Scotland’s justice system SCTS made clear that it would be happy to be covered by the duty, whilst noting that the organisation has limited influence over whom it provides its core services to – and has legal obligations to provide those services

in a way that is fair to all parties in a case. Those obligations would supersede any generic obligation imposed by the duty insofar as the SCTS is supporting the fair, efficient and effective administration of justice through Scotland's courts, tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian.

Those obligations notwithstanding there are a number of activities undertaken by SCTS where action can be taken in furtherance of the duty – principally around the areas of longer-term planning and investment. As such SCTS has agreed to report on how it has met the duty in the preceding year, through the inclusion of a short update report included in the strategic report element of its Annual Report and Accounts. This will cover relevant activities taken in furtherance of the duty over the course of the year in question by, for example:

- Providing a short explanation of the role played by SCTS in the justice system and how that contributes to tackling inequalities, protecting human rights and ensuring that all people can assert the rights to which they are entitled;
- Confirming that, as an employer, we pay the Scottish Living Wage to all staff and to all those whom we contract with – ensuring that we are not promoting low-paid work;
- Outlining any other major decisions taken in relation to issues such as procurement or community engagement where, over the course of the year in question, SCTS has had regard to the duty and taken a particular approach in order to support it.

Promoting Diversity in Board Membership

As an independent non-ministerial department the work of the SCTS is led by its Board, which is chaired by the Lord President. The Board has 14 members, a majority of whom are drawn from Scotland's judiciary. As a statutory body, appointments to the SCTS Board are governed by specific regulations that the SCTS Board is bound to follow^[1].

Board members recognise that a broad diversity of skills, experience, knowledge and perspectives contribute to effective decision making and scrutiny. To that end the SCTS Board is committed to achieving diversity amongst its membership.

The regulations that provide for appointment of members to the SCTS Board set out that:

- appointments are made by the Lord President – who will be advised by a selection panel (drawn from the Board's membership) where a selection process is required for the vacancy in question;

^[1] The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (Procedure for Appointment of Members) Regulations 2015 (SSI No. 53)

- four of the 14 members of the Board are appointed *ex officio* – by virtue of other roles they hold in the justice system;
- a further five members of the Board must hold specific judicial offices as defined under the regulations – this ensures that there is a judicial majority on the Board as required by the legislation that established the SCTS – the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008;
- a further two members of the Board must be members of the legal profession (one a solicitor and one an advocate);
- the final three members of the Board are independent non-executive members.

At the beginning of this reporting period the gender split of the (14 member) Board was 9 male members and 5 female members. This has moved to 8 male members and 6 female members at the end of the period. Moreover in 2018 we have our first appointee from the BME community. Details of the current Board membership can be found [here](#).

In taking forward future appointments to the SCTS Board, members are keen to ensure that greater diversity of membership is promoted. As the categories of Board membership vary the precise action taken in relation to each vacancy that arises may vary. Specific activity to encourage applications from the broadest pool of candidates will include:

- the selection panel in all future appointments being invited to consider the steps that should be taken in relation to promoting applications from those with protected characteristics – ensuring this is consciously considered by those involved in the process and that the specific vacancy in question is taken into consideration;
- using the networks and outreach provided by members of our Equality Advisory Group to ensure that Board vacancies are publicised and shared amongst the broadest range of potential applicants – in addition to publicising these through traditional recruitment channels and via social media;
- a review of the relevant person specifications, skills requirements and general application material used for board recruitment, to ensure that this is not inadvertently creating barriers to application for any group; and
- continuing to support our Board and Committee members as they attend relevant training, events and outreach activity – acting as advocates for the SCTS and increasing interest both in the organisation and the desire to serve on its Board.

3. Embedding Equality within the Criminal Justice System

The SCTS develops an approach to mainstreaming equalities with other justice system organisations at national and local levels to share understanding and co-operate where feasible. We aim to play an integral part in promoting equality in Scottish society by providing services which are of high quality, continuously improving and are efficient and responsive to people's needs.

Criminal Justice Disability Project

Following the establishment of a Criminal Justice Equality and Diversity Sub Group to the Justice Board within the Scottish Government, collaboration across criminal justice organisations saw the implementation of a programme of activities to progress the equality and diversity agenda. In particular, this sub group was asked to focus on disability and gender.

The sub group created the Criminal Justice Disability Project Team (CJDPT) made up of members from criminal justice organisations to specifically focus on access to criminal justice for disabled people:

- [Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service](#),
- [Police Scotland](#),
- [Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service](#),
- [Scottish Prison Service](#),
- [Scottish Legal Aid Board](#),
- [The Law Society of Scotland](#),
- [The Scottish Government](#),

The CJDPT focused its work on the recommendations relating to criminal justice contained within three reports:

- [Justice Disability Steering Group Report](#);
- Hidden in Plain Sight;
- [Out in the Open](#).

In recent years the Project team has considered how it could address the recommendations from the above reports which were seen to relate to criminal justice.

In 2018 the CJDPT prepared the [CJDP Report](#) which details the progress which has been made to date by the Criminal Justice Disability Project. It is recognised that the underlying change that is required in some areas is a cultural one, affected by societal attitudes and as such, monitoring of progress on each individual recommendation was not possible. Several recommendations remain to be fully addressed and therefore this final report offers proposals for how these remaining recommendations could be taken forward. You can view the BSL video below which contains the executive summary of the report: [Criminal Justice Disability Project](#).

Pride in Justice Network

The SCTS is one of the co-founders of the Pride in Justice Network, which was established in October 2018 in order to improve inclusivity and to share good practice in supporting LGBT+ communities. The first networking event was organised by the SCTS and held in Glasgow Sheriff Court. It was attended by a number of representatives from both private and public parts of the justice sector with a view to further co-operation in future.

16 Days of Action

The SCTS once again co-organised the Edinburgh events, with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, as part of the 16 Days of Activism international campaign to challenge gender violence,. The first of two events held in Edinburgh Sheriff Court focused on gender based violence within the LBGT community and the second was 'My Marriage, My Rights' which focussed on forced marriage.

BSL framework

A bespoke BSL/English and deaf/blind interpretation services framework is being drafted by Police Scotland, in conjunction with other justice agencies, and the SCTS will be a part of this framework. The framework will help regulate the provision of interpretation services, and also encourage new interpreters to work in the justice sector. The framework is planned to be ready and fully operating by the end of 2019.

4. Equality Outcomes

The SCTS published its first set of Equality Outcomes in 2011 and reported on their delivery in 2013. In terms of section 4(b) of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 it is required to review the Equality Outcomes and publish a new set every four years.

In this document we are going to report on the delivery of the previous set of outcomes which was [published in April 2015](#) and present a new set for the years 2019-2023.

4.1 Equality Outcomes 2015-2019

Equality Outcome 1

LGBT employees will have confidence in the SCTS as an employer

The SCTS is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity and is developing a culture where equality and diversity are firmly established in the way we do our business. We are committed to providing an inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued for who they are regardless of their age, religion or belief, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding, sexual orientation or gender identity.

The SCTS is a member of [Stonewall Scotland's](#) Diversity Champions Programme, Britain's leading benchmarking exercise for LGBT+ equality. This is part of our commitment to equality and diversity within the workplace. This allows us to compare our work on LGBT+ equality against Stonewall's best practice and against other organisations in all sectors. Assessing our progress and learning from successful approaches in other organisations are important in making sure that we provide a high level of service and support to both court users and staff, respecting their different and unique characteristics. We have made this a clear equality commitment within our [2017-20 Corporate Plan](#) and Stonewall Scotland's Diversity Champions programme supports us in meeting this.

The SCTS submitted its first Workplace Equality Index (WEI) application to Stonewall Scotland in September 2014, with results announced early the following year, and has made three further applications since then. Whilst Stonewall's work and initiatives tend to focus primarily on the LGBT+ community, SCTS has also used the exercise to gauge its performance in support of other protected characteristics as well. The intention is to build on the previous year's results and learn, with the aim of improving the services offered to court users whilst making the SCTS a better, more inclusive place to work. The WEI application process is also

used to identify areas where diversity and inclusion can be improved. For example, a number of policies have been reviewed and amended to incorporate more inclusive language.

The SCTS's Stonewall ratings for the 2015-2018 indices (360, 328, 353 and 321) have fluctuated, partly due to a lack of progress on certain fronts and changes in key personnel during the period. A dedicated Equality and Diversity Manager was appointed in late 2016, and the SCTS achieved its best ranking to date in 2018, also coinciding with the launch of a number of new initiatives, including the new Transgender - Transitioning at Work Policy.

In August 2018 the decision was taken to defer SCTS's participation in the WEI for a year and to submit its next WEI application in 2019. This has enabled further liaison with Stonewall and more intensified work on LGBT+ inclusion to be undertaken. A number of initiatives have taken place in order to raise awareness about LGBT+ among staff and to promote the SCTS's image as a diverse and inclusive organisation.

In February 2019 members of the SCTS Staff Equality Engagement Network organised two significant events. Equali-Tea on Purple Friday in Aberdeen SC raised £180 for Stonewall UK to help in their fight against discrimination towards LGBT+ people in the UK. In Glasgow SC staff were encouraged to sign the #NoBystanders pledge to show their support to stand up to hateful language and abuse both at work and in the community and support everyone who may experience bullying or harassment because of their protected characteristics. A number of articles have been published on the Equality Hub in which many aspects of LGBT+ inclusion have been raised, e.g. how to become a better ally to LGBT+ people.

As mentioned above, the SCTS is also one of the co-founders of the Pride in Justice Network, which was established in October 2018 in order to improve inclusivity and to share good practice in supporting LGBT+ communities in the justice sector. The first networking event was organised by the SCTS and held in Glasgow Sheriff Court. It was attended by a number of representatives from both private and public parts of the justice sector with a view to further co-operation in future. This type of activity is helping to promote the SCTS as an inclusive employer and attract talent from the LGBT+ community.

Equality Outcome 2

The SCTS workforce will be more reflective of those in the Scottish population particularly in relation to BME members.

The Annual SCTS People Scorecard recognises there is a shortage of representation of BME people employed within SCTS. This is something SCTS seeks to address to ensure a balanced workforce within the organisation. This is fully supported by the Equality Advisory Group and Equality Steering Group. The SCTS aimed to increase the proportion of BME employees from 1.8% (declared) to 2.5% by 31 March 2017. The SCTS carried out a review and update exercise in April 2016 when introducing its new computerised HR Connect system encouraging staff to update their personal and contact details. A communication was issued to all staff explaining that under the Equality Act (2010)(Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 the SCTS is required to capture employee data which will allow the organisation to measure its effectiveness in meeting the Equality Act. This exercise, however, did not provide sufficient data to confirm whether the number of BME employees has increased. Therefore data presented in the [People Scorecard 2017/2018](#) is unlikely to be fully representative.

Although various initiatives have been put in place to attract BME people to work within our organisation, there is still more to do in this area. Increasing engagement with BME communities will be addressed within the new Recruitment & Resourcing Strategy, which is currently being drafted and is planned to be published in summer 2019. In order to further intensify our work to improve the diversity of our workforce a specific new Equality Outcome: *'We will improve accessibility to our employment'* for the years 2019-2023 has been created - for further details please see section **Equality Outcomes 2019-2023**.

The SCTS continues its efforts towards increasing staff confidence in declaring their personal data. The first supporting outcome to *Equality Outcome 1* for the years 2019-2023 specifically focuses on promoting the value of submitting and collecting appropriate equality monitoring data - for further details please see section **Equality Outcomes 2019-2023**.

Equality Outcome 3

We will increase the confidence of our staff to declare their protected characteristics.

As part of the recruitment process, applicants are invited to inform the SCTS about their protected characteristics through the completion of an equal opportunities monitoring form. SCTS did not subsequently gather information in relation to protected characteristics for those who joined as new employees, and it was recognised that this information is vital for staff inclusion and for monitoring whether the proportion of SCTS staff is reflective of the Scottish population.

An awareness campaign about the importance of staff providing information about their protected characteristics was launched in 2016. An intranet article prepared by the HRU Director and supported by the Chief Executive was published encouraging staff to update their personal details. This was supported by the Chair of the SCTS Public and Commercial Services (PCS) Union Branch, who reinforced the importance of collection of information to ensure all staff are treated fairly. The Chair of the SCTS PCSG also took the opportunity to emphasise that the SCTS takes the need to be fair and open seriously in order to ensure we can support all staff. This notwithstanding, not all staff completed this part of their personal details by the deadline stated.

During this campaign some inconsistencies were noted in the range of monitoring questions throughout all HR systems. Following a review, a set of new questions that will be used across all HR systems has been agreed. The Equality Monitoring questions on the recruitment system have been updated to reflect the new wording agreed and this will go live in the middle of April 2019. This will assist with reporting and monitoring how and where vacancies were advertised, and whether the SCTS is reaching a wide enough audience.

The SCTS remains committed to increasing the number of employees disclosing their protected characteristics, therefore the first supporting outcome to *Equality Outcome 1* for the years 2019-2023 specifically focuses on promoting the value of submitting and collecting appropriate equality monitoring data - for further details please see section **Equality Outcomes 2019-2023**.

Equality Outcome 4

We will aim to make the SCTS workforce more reflective of those in the Scottish population particularly in relation to young people (age 16-24)

It has been recognised from information contained in the annual SCTS People Scorecard that the number of 16-24 year olds employed in the organisation is disproportionately low. The SCTS is looking at ways to attract young people through recruitment in order to develop a more balanced workforce and for the purposes of supporting future workforce planning.

Our service provider under the Scottish Government recruitment framework agreement, TMP, provides bespoke advice on where to advertise our jobs and what social media platforms would be suitable. The framework agreement is due to end in April 2020 and we will explore whether this framework will be re-tendered, or whether we should explore other partnership opportunities, to increase our social media presence. The SCTS also has a LinkedIn account and this is used to promote our roles to a wider audience.

In November 2015 the SCTS recruited two Modern Apprentices (MA) to the Information Technology Unit. Six more were recruited in HQ units, Office of Public Guardian, Courts and Tribunals in September 2016. One from ITU and three of the others now have full-time jobs with the SCTS. Another six apprentices were recruited in June 2018.

Recommendations from these exercises were taken forward and it was agreed that for future recruitment campaigns:

- the SCTS would recruit MAs to genuine and permanent vacancies, through fair and open competition;
- a targeted advertising campaign will be undertaken in consultation with Skills Development Scotland;
- the time MAs have to complete their qualifications will be increased from 12 to 18 months as it was felt 12 months put too much pressure on the MAs to both learn the job and complete the qualifications.

The SCTS has made an organisational pledge to offer a minimum of five work experience placements for young unemployed persons each year. The SCTS introduced and co-ordinated an annual arrangement within a selected number of courts for advertised “work experience” aimed at 16-24 year olds. These placements have been made through a variety of methods such as the DWP work experience programme, which originated in Edinburgh Sheriff Court, and have

resulted in fixed term and permanent appointments. DWP work placements have been introduced throughout the SCTS. Others have been as a result of direct enquiries from individuals, local councils and training providers. This involved planning and promoting placements in advance and creating development programmes for these individuals which would last between one and three months. The primary aim of the placement scheme is to attract and train a pool of staff who would be able to use this experience to successfully apply through fair and open recruitment for positions in the SCTS in future.

In 2018 the SCTS was again listed as a Diversity Champion in Stonewall's "Starting Out" guide, both in its paper version and on its [webpage](#). It is the UK's first national directory of LGBT+ friendly employers. The guide is targeted at the 150,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans students in Britain as well as jobseekers and graduates.

The SCTS regularly takes part in a number of community engagement events with a focus on young people:

- Young Scotland Programme

The Young Scotland Programme, which is run by two charities, the Young Programme and the Institute of Contemporary Scotland, seeks to:

- develop confidence and communications skills;
- stretch the mind and broaden awareness of issues affecting society;
- encourage research;
- enhance writing and presentational abilities;
- provide a forum for debate and dialogue;
- introduce fresh ideas and creativity.

The SCTS has been engaged in this programme for over a decade.

- The MiniTrials project

In 2002 SCTS began involvement in the organisation of MiniTrials. The idea was instigated by Lord Kinclaven, a High Court Judge, to give pupils the chance to take the law into their own hands, literally, by acting out criminal jury trials. MiniTrials, which are organised by the Faculty of Advocates, aim to demystify the law in an enjoyable way and show young people what really happens in a criminal court. They are made possible by contributions and input from members of SCTS staff.

- The School Mock Court Case Project

The School Mock Court Case Project affords primary and secondary school students the opportunity to learn and develop life skills through the medium of involvement in various roles supporting a civil case culminating in a hearing of their case before a judge or sheriff. Through involvement in this exercise more pupils develop an interest in the work of the legal system. Successful teams may be afforded the opportunity to compete at higher levels and on occasion in an international arena. In recent years SCTS has facilitated hearings for both junior and senior school students. Venues have included the Court of Session, the High Court of Justiciary and various sheriff courts including Aberdeen, Ayr, Dundee, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Hamilton, Inverness and Stirling. Further details on the work of the Project may be found at this [link](#).

- Schools Public Speaking competition

Since 2017 the SCTS has been providing support organising the newly established COPFS Schools Public Speaking competition. This competition is open to all mainstream state secondary and independent schools in Scotland for S2 and S3 pupils and will culminate in a National Final in Edinburgh. Competitors are invited to speak on topics which seek to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues affecting young people in Scotland. The SCTS is providing facilities for this competition and some judicial office holders are also acting as judges in the panels.

Other examples of initiatives at a local level include Livingston Sheriff Court's cooperation with West Lothian College whereby regular visits are arranged for HNC students in Social Science and Business. The students are provided with a short presentation, a guided tour of the building and the opportunity to view a court in session.

Equality Outcome 5

We will strive to increase civic participation for people with protected characteristics.

We are aware that elements of the SCTS estate may need to be adapted where possible, in order to improve accessibility for potential jurors with protected characteristics, more specifically for those with disabilities. There is also a need to manage the expectations of potential jurors through improved communication of available reasonable adjustments, the layout of court rooms and current legislative requirements, which may have a bearing on jury service.

A study, [Enabling Jury Service](#), was undertaken by a working group chaired by a senator of the Supreme Courts, Lord Matthews. The subsequent report makes a series of recommendations intended to open the way for as many people as possible to serve on juries, taking into consideration their individual needs, impairments or disabilities. It explores what reasonable adjustments and measures might be put in place in courts to support jurors, and the criteria that may be considered by the court in determining the suitability of a person to serve as a juror in a particular case.

The report's recommendations fall into two categories: those in which procedures can potentially be adapted without changes to legislation and those where it is more likely that new legislation will be required. The second category includes a recommendation that persons other than jury members, for example a BSL/English interpreter or note taker, could be present in the jury room during the jury's deliberations in the case. Where legislative changes have been proposed in the report these will require to be considered by the Scottish Government and may be subject to wider consultation.

An implementation group has been established to take forward the remaining recommendations of the report with a view to having certain measures - training Jury Liaison Officers for the courts, an online e-learning package for staff, an online information sheet for jurors and the purchase of suitable portable equipment - in place by the end of October 2019. In support of the ongoing work associated with the report, a specific action has been created in the new *Equality Outcome 2 - We will improve the accessibility of our services* for the years 2019-2023 - for further details please see section **Equality Outcomes 2019-2023**.

Guidance information for jurors is currently held electronically on the SCTS website. These guides provide helpful information on preparing for jury service, what to expect at court, the role of the judge and the jury, how the trial will proceed and a glossary of terms.

- [Guide to jury service in the High Court and sheriff court](#)
- [Guide to Jury Service in the Court of Session](#)

SCTS has also produced an [information film](#) split into 4 short chapters, each covering specific areas for potential jurors which shows different stages of the jury experience.

Where access to the internet is not available, this information is distributed in hard copy. The guidance notes and forms are made available in a wide array of formats on request, and details of how to obtain these is set out on the SCTS website.

The SCTS has also carried out accessibility audits of its estate. Details of site facilities will be published in an accessible format and placed on the internet for service users to access in advance of their planned visits to courts and other SCTS buildings. This is supported by a specific action in a new Equality Outcome: *We will improve the accessibility of our services* for the years 2019-2023 - for further details please see section **Equality Outcomes 2019-2023**.

Equality Outcome 6

We will improve the quality of information held by SCTS in relation to services provided to child and other vulnerable witness.

The biennial SCTS Court User Satisfaction Survey collects information on services provided to court users. It has been recognised this does not encompass certain services provided specifically to vulnerable witnesses e.g. where the witness may have given evidence by live TV link from a location outwith the court building.

With an aim to ensure that all efforts are being made to close any gap in relation to this valuable feedback, the SCTS has approached various support organisations who are involved with children, their families, and vulnerable witnesses in court proceedings, to see if we can obtain any information in relation to their experiences which may prove helpful to us in support of our equality outcomes, improving services at court and in our annual reporting on [Standards of Service for Victims and Witnesses](#). We are looking to ensure that there is a mechanism whereby information routinely collected by these organisations could be shared for the foregoing purposes without causing unnecessary distress to the individual involved.

We have managed to initiate such cooperation with Children 1st, Victim Support Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland.

4.2 Equality Outcomes 2019 - 2023

Going forward we have three key Outcomes supported by relevant actions (detailed below). Having published the BSL Authority Plan we have also taken the opportunity to consolidate its recommendations into the outcomes. This will enable SCTS to monitor and report collectively and consistently over the period.

Equality Outcome 1

We will promote awareness and understanding of equality and diversity within our organisation by:

- promoting the value of submitting and collecting appropriate equality monitoring data;
- introducing Inclusion Ambassadors with specialist knowledge of the protected characteristics;
- supporting and developing the function of the SCTS Staff Equality Engagement Network (SEEN);
- offering awareness sessions for members of our staff and introducing bespoke e-learning;
- introducing a Reverse Mentoring scheme.

Equality Outcome 2

We will improve the accessibility of our services by:

- creating a bespoke page on our website that deals entirely with accessibility information and guidance in relation to all protected characteristics;
- scoping the use of online interpreting and support services at public counters to facilitate ad hoc general enquiries, payment of financial penalties, etc.;
- promoting use of online support services e.g. [‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’](#) by updating our website pages and raising awareness among members of SCTS staff;

- implementing recommendations from the Enabling Jury Service Report;
- working with other justice agencies to increase the pool of qualified and suitable experienced BSL/English and deaf/blind interpreters working in the justice system.

Equality Outcome 3

We will improve accessibility to our employment by:

- engaging with a variety of local communities in order to raise awareness of the critical role the SCTS plays in the justice system;
- introducing the SCTS Recruitment and Resourcing Strategy with a particular focus on developing SCTS as a socially inclusive employer;
- improving accessibility to the recruitment section of our website;
- introducing an inclusive work placement scheme in order to assist people to gain work experience; and in preparation for same to raise associated awareness among members of staff.

5. Going forward

The SCTS is constantly working on improving accessibility to its services.

Civil Online

In autumn of 2016 a new Integrated Case Management System was launched for civil court cases. Amongst other things, the system creates a platform to enable on-line interaction with court users - e.g. online submission of cases, case tracking, lodging of productions in digital format and online communication of court interlocutors. It also paved the way for the introduction of Simple Procedure, a new way of litigating low-value civil cases which was introduced in November 2016.

Simple Procedure Civil Online is an external portal on the SCTS website enabling claims to be raised, case documents submitted, court fees paid and cases tracked online. The first phase of Civil Online was launched in March 2018, allowing parties in Simple Procedure cases, or their representatives, to track details of the case online, to check whether the case has been contested and to view the dates of any scheduled hearings.

An upgrade was released in December 2018 allowing court users to access court documents through Civil Online, with automatic notification, rather than receiving new documents by post. Since the December release there have been over 4,000 simple procedure cases registered, of which 54% of claimants and 33% of respondents have opted for online notification.

The second phase of Civil Online, launched on 25 April 2019, signals the beginning of digital files for Simple Procedure cases. Civil Online now allows solicitors and members of the public to complete an online claim form, pay court fees, lodge documents and defend cases. In time this will allow us to have fully digital hearings, with all case documentation available and presented digitally in the court room environment.

Children and Vulnerable Witness Centre

The Evidence and Procedure Review, led by SCTS at the request of the Justice Board, aimed to significantly improve the experiences of child and vulnerable adult witnesses involved in the Scottish criminal justice system.

The Review highlighted the need to transform the way in which the evidence of children and vulnerable witnesses is taken. This was followed up by the Lord Justice Clerk's Practice Note

to encourage the use of evidence by commissioner procedure where a child or vulnerable witness can be questioned in advance of a trial under the supervision of a judge and their evidence recorded. Evaluation of the Practice Note has shown that having the right facilities and environment are critical factors and the development of a new evidence suite will mean that children and vulnerable people can be supported to give their best evidence, and have it tested, in a friendly environment.

A new hearings facility is being built, with financial support from the Scottish Government, in Glasgow. It is intended that the suite should be an exemplar for the very best service that can be provided for children and vulnerable witnesses, with state-of-the-art facilities allowing witnesses to give evidence in criminal trials and to participate in tribunal hearings within a safe, sensitive and secure environment. The suite will include sensory rooms and break-out rooms which are intended to make the surroundings pleasant and relaxed, as well as a Control Room, the nerve-centre of the facility.

The suite will accommodate evidence by commissioner hearings for criminal trials, and children attending for Additional Support Needs and any other hearings of the Health and Education Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland, whether as witnesses or otherwise. The suite has been prepared with the collaboration of third sector organisations and with direct input from children themselves. It will influence the provision of future similar facilities in Aberdeen, Inverness and Edinburgh as demand for such centres is expected to grow significantly. The use of Commissioner hearings is already rising and the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Bill, which is presently going through the Scottish Parliament proposes a presumption that children who are due to give evidence in the most serious criminal cases should have their evidence pre-recorded in advance of any trial.


6. Involving Others

The SCTS would like to thank the following organisations who were invited to comment on the draft of the Equality Outcomes 2019-2023:


- British Deaf Association Scotland
- CEMVO Scotland
- Engender
- MECOPP Carers Centre
- National Autistic Society Scotland
- PCS Union
- Rape Crisis Scotland
- RNIB Scotland
- Scottish Trans Alliance
- Stonewall Scotland

7. Other Languages/ Formats

If you require information from this document in another language/format please contact:

 Operations Delivery Business Unit
Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
Spur N1, Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

 csenquiries@scotcourtribunals.gov.uk

 0131 444 3455



If you use British Sign Language (BSL) and wish to phone us using a sign language interpreter, you can use the online video relay interpreting service. For more information see the [contactSCOTLAND website](#).



If you want to contact us using text relay please follow the guidance at this link - [the Next Generation Text Service](#).