Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board

Annual Report 2025-26

This Annual Report is submitted to the Executive Office pursuant to paragraph 11(1) of Schedule 1 of the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019. This provision requires the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board to report, as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year and send to the Executive Office a report on the exercise of the Redress Board's function during that year.

FOREWORD

In presenting this sixth Annual Report of the HIA Redress Board, it is important once again that I acknowledge the extended and deeply challenging journey that victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse have endured. This includes their efforts to secure the establishment of the Redress Board, their contribution to the effective discharge of its duties but also their continued determination to secure the implementation of the recommendations of the Hart Report.

This is the final Annual Report to be produced by the HIA Redress Board as the primary focus in the 2026-27 reporting year will be the formal closure process as all applications have been determined by a panel. Statistics are important in demonstrating the performance of the Redress Board, but they do not capture the personal significance of the process for many victims and survivors who have provided accounts of their lived experience that are often complex and deeply personal. It has been a privilege and also a significant responsibility to contribute to a process intended to provide recognition, acknowledgment and redress.

I would like to also recognise the continued commitment of Redress Board panel members, administrative staff, Executive Office (TEO) officials, Department of Justice (DoJ) officials, the Victims & Survivors Service (VSS), the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA), Department of Health (DoH), the Public Records Office NI (PRONI), the institutions and solicitors representing applicants.

The Redress Scheme formally closed to new applications on 2nd April 2025, just a few days into this financial year. As in preceding Annual Reports, we will report in detail on the exercise of our statutory functions within the context of operational dependencies and aspects of the application process that fall beyond the Board’s statutory remit. This is our final operational year, and last Annual Report and I am very pleased to confirm that every validated application received by the Redress Board, beginning in March 2020 to April 2025, has now been determined and therefore the statutory functions of the Redress Board in that regard, have been fully discharged.

In my last Annual report, I reported an increase in new applications which had begun to manifest itself in the final few weeks of that reporting year, leading up to the closure of the scheme on 2 April 2025. The Redress Board received a total of 370 new applications in March 2025 alone as opposed to 65 in March 2024. In total in the last 5 weeks of the scheme the Board received 501 new applications, an unprecedented volume in comparative terms to all other operational years. This is not an infrequent occurrence, as noted in other redress schemes in their final operational year and the Redress Board had made the necessary preparatory steps in advance.

Much of the performance analysis reported in this final operational year must be viewed through the lens of that new reality in early April 2025. The rise in applications in such a condensed period placed significant pressure on the Redress Board, in particular the administrative team and the panels who have both demonstrated great commitment and diligence to process all outstanding

applications within this single reporting year, reducing where possible any potential burden or stress on applicants.
As of the **31 March 2026** the Redress Board had received a total of **5,496** applications relating to **9,412** residential placements covering approximately **156** different institutions in Northern Ireland. Applicants often report more than one institution and on average applications received have named approximately **1.7** institutions. Effectively**,** all **5496** applications have now been considered by a panel of first instance and a determination issued. Two currently remain under appeal and one is subject to ongoing judicial review proceedings. I consider this a very significant achievement which compares very favourably with the performance of our counterparts within and external to this jurisdiction

The excellent performance of the Redress Board, as summarised in each annual report from establishment in March 2019 to the final operational phase in March 2026, demonstrates that the Board has delivered all of its business and statutory objectives with consistency, efficiency and proportionate expense. Our primary focus is and has always been, the applicant at the centre of every application and our objective has been to manage what can be a challenging process for them in a trauma informed manner, demonstrating empathy and essential due diligence.

As President, I am responsible for the effective and efficient discharge of the functions of the Redress Board in accordance with the legislative framework, which governs the operation of the Redress Board, and by which we are bound, and I have remained determined to continually improve those services for which the Redress Board is solely accountable until all applications were complete. The focus on the timely delivery of determinations that are fair, transparent and most importantly trauma aware, has been consistent throughout this last year and is evident in the quality of service provided and demonstrated in this year's statistical analysis.

As reported in every annual report to date the trend to submit non-compliant applications by solicitors and unrepresented applicants unfortunately persisted notwithstanding the decline in these applications following the introduction in 2022/23 of a more robust rules-based approach. This may be an outcome of a more pressurised time frame to submit applications as the closure of the scheme approached on 2 April 2025. However, the practice placed an inordinate strain on the reducing resources of the Redress Board in its final year and despite multiple reminders and support offered to solicitors and unrepresented applicants throughout the year these applications were very significantly delayed due to the absence of Rule 4 statutory proofs.

This is evident in the statistics provided in this report which demonstrate a significantly longer timeframe to reach determination on some non-compliant applications. This fell outside the control of the Redress Board. However, where it was within my statutory remit to do so, I introduced timely interventions which served to reduce further unnecessary delay and stress for applicants. All applications have now been determined by the Redress Board but for those applications which continue to not meet their statutory rule 4 obligations, it remains the responsibility of solicitors and unrepresented applicants to submit the required evidence before any award, as directed by a panel, can be paid to the applicant. It is for this reason you will note this report contains some data that relates to payments made in the current financial year (2026/27) for applications that were determined in 2025-26.

The Redress Board has always considered it important to signpost help and assistance where we can and so we continued to promote the statutory role provided by the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse, the Executive Office and the non-statutory support role provided by the Victims & Survivors Service (VSS), as we understand them, in all our communications with unrepresented applicants and solicitors. It has been our duty to work in collaboration with our stakeholders, and this has proved impactful in assisting the Redress Board to discharge its duties so effectively.

I also wish to acknowledge the pivotal roles undertaken by my predecessors Lord Justice Colton and Mr Justice Huddleston in establishing the HIA Redress Board during the period of unprecedented challenge created by the COVID-19 public health emergency and for exemplary leadership through extended periods of challenging operational pressures and on occasion intense scrutiny from external bodies and government officials. Despite this the performance standards reported in this final operational year and in each of the preceding Annual Reports demonstrate a continuous high standard of service.

The performance outcomes of the Redress Board demonstrate that a number of its practices provide a valuable model for future similar schemes and wider public service delivery. As such, I have taken the opportunity to briefly explore the lessons to be learned and good practice principles in a short addendum to this report which I hope will be useful to those responsible for the implementation of future redress schemes in Northern Ireland and possibly beyond.

Mr Justice Fowler

President of the Historical Institutional Redress Board

FUNCTIONS OF THE REDRESS BOARD

1. For ease of reference the Redress Board responsibilities and functions, within the wider end to end redress scheme, are limited to the receipt and processing of applications, determining applications, issuing instructions to make payments of compensation to victims and survivors and the compelling of evidence where it is considered necessary in the interests of justice to do so.

NON-COMPLIANT APPLICATIONS

2. In previous Annual Reports, we consistently set out our frustration at the number of **non-compliant applications** received, despite **98%** of applicants being represented by a solicitor. In this reporting year **25%** of applications were not compliant with Rule 4 statutory requirements, a **2%** reduction on the previous year.

In the latter part of this financial year considerable delay materialised in the receipt of mandatory proofs specific to probate evidence, as stipulated by Rule 4. Despite multiple attempts to obtain this evidence from applicants or their legal representatives it became necessary to introduce a new direction to ensure the timely listing of these applications before a panel to avoid any further delay on behalf of applicants. Payment of awards in these applications was suspended pending receipt of the outstanding Rule 4 evidence. Consequently, the statistics demonstrate an elongated completion date for these applications, and while frustrating this remains outside the control of the Board.

During this period the Redress Board continued to reinforce the specific roles and responsibilities of solicitors in advising applicants, assisting them in the submission of thoroughly prepared applications, explaining and adhering to the relevant declarations and their obligation to communicate effectively with their client on the progress of an application and any appeal.

PREPARATION FOR CLOSURE

3. Now that the Redress Board has determined all of the applications submitted to it, preparations for closure began in earnest in this report period. The Retention and Disposal Register was approved by the Executive Committee in the autumn of 2025 and is now actively applied. In the coming weeks the Online Application Solicitor Portal will be closed with future communication conducted by email and telephone. Only a small number of staff remain within the Redress Board, and formal closure is anticipated in the autumn of 2026.

PROGESS AGAINST REDRESS BOARD BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26

4. The purpose of the Redress Board Business Plan 2025/26 is to define a challenging set of indicators to ensure the effective discharge of Redress Board functions. These performance standards are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure relevance against known behaviours, compliance rates, and other business priorities as agreed with the Executive Office (TEO). Given the spike in application numbers close to year end in the 2024/25 reporting year, the Management Board elected to revise the performance standards for this reporting year to be fully transparent about

its ability to manage such high numbers of applications submitted simultaneously.

5. The performance standards reflect the Redress Board's evidence-based understanding of the realities and challenges of-

- verifying the attendance of over 500 applicants across multiple institutions.
- the additional investigatory steps undertaken by the Redress Board to verify attendance in the absence of detailed institutional records through other channels – such as PRONI.
- the high number of incomplete and non-compliant applications.
- the behaviours and rate of compliance of all the various stakeholders within legislative timeframes and underpinning policies and procedures of the Redress Board.

6. The Redress Board Business Plan for 2025-26 set out 18 key business objectives for delivery during the year in support of our four strategic aims, which are to:

- deliver efficient and effective Redress Board services.
- deliver high quality services that support Redress Board Panel members and meet the needs of applicants.
- develop and lead our people to achieve our business objectives; and
- deliver a controlled financial and commercial environment achieving value for money and good corporate governance.

7. As of 31 March 2026, all **18 business objectives were exceeded.** All six of the administrative Performance Standards for service delivery agreed with the Management Board and Executive Office were achieved despite increased workload and reducing resources**.**

Performance Standard	
90% of applications for compensation received by post will be registered within 4 working days of receipt.	**100%**
90% of all outstanding Rule 7 notice issued by the 19 May 2025	**100%**
80% of applications for redress will be listed before a panel within 10 weeks of validation of the application;	**96%**
80% of Determination Notices will be issued within five working days of receipt of the panel's Summary of Reasons.	**100%**
85% of Payment of Award Instructions for Final Determinations will be issued to the designated NICS Department within three working days of receipt of the award acceptance slip.	**100%**
Panel files will be prepared to a sufficient standard to ensure an annual adjournment rate of no greater than **9%**	**1%**

8. The Redress Board has an aspiration to have **compliant applications** listed before a panel within **28 weeks of receipt of the application.** However, this aspiration cannot be categorised as a Performance Target due to the complexities of the verification process under Rules 4 & 7 and compliance with necessary Rule 8 & 9 information requests made by Redress Board during the validation process. These functions are outside the direct operational control of the Redress Board

administration. The average time to process a compliant application during 2025-26 was **16 weeks**.

STATUS OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

9. As of **31 March 2026**, Redress Board panels have made award determinations totalling **£116,202,750** including Section 14 awards. Following section 13 actuarial adjustments, **£115,004,252** is payable to applicants. **£114,599,252** has been paid directly into the applicant or applicant's solicitor's account on receipt of an Acceptance of Award from the applicant.

10. During the **sixth year of operation** the Redress Board received **131** applications, a decrease of **836** applications compared to applications received in 2024-2025. This is a significant reduction; however, it is important to clarify that all 131 applications were received in the final 2 days of the Redress Scheme which formally closed on 2nd April 2025 in accordance with Section 5(2) of the Historical Institutional Abuse Act (NI) 2019. As set out in the Foreword, the Redress Board has received a total of 501 applications in the last 5 weeks of the Scheme.

As previously reported, the total number of **non-compliant** applications received during this year was **242** equating to **25%** of the applications, a further **2% reduction** in the number of **non-compliant applications** received in the fifth year of operation. This small reduction is to be welcomed, however some of these cases remained non-compliant for extended periods of time, creating significant delay in the payment of awards to applicants and increasing pressure on the resources of the Board.

11. Of the **5,496 compliant applications** received as of 31 March 2026, all have now been considered by a panel. The outcomes of those considerations are detailed in Table 1 below: -

Table 1 - Panel Consideration Outcomes

Redress Board Panel	
Section 14 Initial Payment Order made and still in place	**0**
Adjourned by panel for further information	**0**
Final Determination	**5,105**
Final Determination - Appeal Outstanding	**2**
Withdrawn before a panel	**389**
Total	**5,496**

Table 2 - Current Number of Incomplete Applications – Unable to Progress

Solicitor/Applicant	
Incomplete applications	***0***

12. A detailed breakdown of the performance of the Redress Board during our sixth year of operations is provided at paragraphs 13-26.

FUNCTIONS OVERVIEW

Applications Received

13. Table 3 provides a breakdown of applications received by quarter and Table 4 provides a breakdown of Priority Applications received by Quarter. The **86% decrease** in the number of applications received during the reporting year in comparison to 2024-2025 reporting year is a direct consequence of the closure of the Redress Scheme on 2nd April 2025.

Table 3 – Applications Received by Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Applications Received 2020-21	245	334	380	314	**1,273**
Applications Received 2021-22	368	365	261	289	**1,283**
Applications Received 2022-23	369	266	180	240	**1,055**
Applications Received 2023-24	237	201	173	176	**787**
Applications Received 2024-25	156	157	159	495	**967**
Applications Received 2025-26	131				**131**
Total Applications Received					**5,496**

Table 4 – Priority Applications Received by Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Priority applications 2020/21	58	64	79	35	236
Priority applications 2021/22	38	32	31	28	129
Priority applications 2022/23	30	21	23	23	97
Priority applications 2023/24	20	24	19	23	86
Priority applications 2024/25	27	21	18	52	118
Priority applications 2025/26	14				14

Age and jurisdiction of applicants

14. For this reporting year the average age of applicants was **58**. The average age of applicants throughout the scheme as a whole was **61.**

Table 5 – Average Age of Applicants by year

	Age
Average age of applicants 2020/21	**64**
Average age of applicants 2021/22	**62**
Average age of applicants 2022/23	**61**
Average age of applicants 2023/24	**60**
Average age of applicants 2024/25	**58**
Average age of applicants 2025/26	**58**

The number of applications received from outside the jurisdiction during 2025-26 was **18** compared to **69** in 2024-25, **96** in 2023-24, **91** in 2022-23, **137** in 2021-22 and **267** in 2020-21.

In total 12.5% of applications received by the HIA Redress Board were from residents outside this jurisdiction.

Table 6 – Applications by Country of Residence of Applicants

Country	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
Northern Ireland	**1006**	**1146**	**964**	**691**	**898**	**113**	**4818**
Republic of Ireland	**39**	**24**	**15**	**16**	**8**	**3**	**105**
Australia	**56**	**10**	**5**	**2**	**4**	**1**	**78**
GB	**161**	**93**	**65**	**70**	**52**	**14**	**455**
Other	**11**	**10**	**6**	**8**	**5**	**0**	**40**
Total	**1273**	**1283**	**1055**	**787**	**967**	**131**	**5496**

Payments Summary

15. As of **31 March 2026**, Redress Board panels have made award determinations totalling **£116,202,750** including Section 14 awards. Following section 13 actuarial adjustments, **£115,004,252** is payable to applicants.

The sum of **£114,599,252** has been paid directly into the applicant or applicant's solicitor's account on receipt of an Acceptance of Award from the applicant. The annual quarterly breakdown of payments made is set out in the Table 7 below.

16. This is the final Annual Report to be produced by the HIA Redress Board. For clarity, expenditure of £277,500 in the first quarter of the new financial year (2026-27) has been reported in Table 7. It is estimated that the total payment of awards to be processed in the remainder of this reporting year will not exceed a further £155k.

Table 7 – Payments to Applicants by Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Payments 2020-21	**£429,500**	**£2,120,987**	**£3,209,970**	**£4,706,548**	**£10,467,005**
Payments 2021-22	**£6,189,035**	**£7,453,637**	**£6,438,078**	**£6,700,474**	**£26,781,225**
Payments 2022-23	**£6,157,093**	**£5,943,250**	**£7,359,073**	**£6,986,000**	**£26,445,416**
Payments 2023-24	**£5,978,916**	**£4,969,500**	**£4,539,410**	**£4,594,760**	**£20,082,586**
Payments 2024-25	**£4,342,193**	**£4,170,000**	**£3,893,500**	**£4,408,704**	**£16,814,396**
Payments 2025-26	**£4,716,274**	**£4,141,365**	**£4,093,985**	**£1,057,000**	**£14,008,624**

Payments 2026-27	**£277,500**				
Total Payments					**£114,876,752**

Panel Sessions Summary

17. Redress Board panels have met on **a total of 1,553** occasions considering **6,016** applications. Table 8 below, details the number of panel sessions each quarter, which has increased or decreased in line with the number of **compliant and validated** applications that are ready to proceed for consideration before a panel. The Redress Board regularly reviews the number of panel sessions to ensure that there are sufficient panels to match the number of **compliant and validated applications** in order that it can flex up or down to the number of required panel sessions**.**

18. The substantial increase in business in the final weeks of the 2024-2025 reporting year and in the first few days of April 2025 increased the need for panel sessions in quarters 1 and 2 of 2025-2026. The Redress Board ensured all **compliant and validated applications** were placed before a panel without undue delay, **on average within 14 days** in this reporting year. The small remaining number of applications could not be listed before a panel until February 2026 when outstanding medical evidence which the applicant chose to submit was submitted for the panel's consideration. There are no more applications pending before the Redress Board. There is one outstanding Judicial Review.

Table 8 –Number of panel sessions by Quarter

	Q1	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Total**
Number of panel sessions 2020-21	15	37	61	82	**195**
Number of panel sessions 2021-22	95	109	113	122	**439**
Number of panel sessions 2022-23	111	103	93	80	**387**
Number of panel sessions 2023-24	66	59	50	51	**226**
Number of panel sessions 2024-25	46	40	40	43	**169**
Number of panel sessions 2025-26	52	55	27	3	**137**
Total Panel sessions					**1,553**

Panel Outcome Summary

19. Table 9 below shows the breakdown of **566 applications** considered at sessions each quarter. In this reporting year the number of applications considered reduced by **11.8%** in consequence of the closure of the Scheme after which the Redress Board no longer accepted new applications. (It should be noted that the same application may have been before a panel more than once during this period).

Table 9 –Number of applications considered by panel by Quarter.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Number of cases considered in 2020-21	47	149	198	319	**713**
Number of cases considered in 2021-22	378	457	421	406	**1,662**
Number of cases considered in 2022-23	372	451	402	327	**1,552**
Number of cases considered in 2023-24	282	227	201	171	**881**
Number of cases considered in 2024-25	170	169	152	151	**642**
Number of cases considered in 2025-26	233	217	107	9	**566**
Total number of cases considered					**6,016**

20. Table 10 below shows a breakdown of the outcomes of the **566 applications** considered at panel sessions. It should be noted that the same application may have been before a panel more than once during this period. Applications are withdrawn in the circumstances where an applicant has been identified as being over the age of 18, resident in an institution after 1995 or on the applicant's own volition.

Table 10 – Panel outcomes by year

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
Adjourned by panel	110	143	64	13	7	3	**340**
Section 14 Order	76	48	30	8	3	1	**166**
Withdrawn	22	72	141	76	44	34	**389**
Final Determination – no award	39	304	266	118	61	103	**891**
Final Determination - award	466	1,095	1,051	666	527	425	**4,230**
Total	**713**	**1,662**	**1,552**	**881**	**642**	**566**	**6,016**

Table 11 shows the breakdown of the reasons for no award.

Table 11 – No Award Reasons by year.

No Award Reason	Number	%
Contradictory Evidence	13	2
No Jurisdiction	152	16
Threshold Not Met	726	82
Total	891	100

21. Table 12 below sets out the total number of applications which fall within each band as set out in the Redress Board Banding Guidance. Please note that this will include the Panel Determination for any pending appeals and will show the Appeal Determination for any resulted appeal

Table 12 – Breakdown of all Determination Awards by Band

Award Band	No' of Final Determinations within band (Does not include S14's pending FD)	
	Number	%
£10,000	579	13
£10,001 - £29,999	2,162	51
£30,000 - £49,999	1,009	23
£50,000 - £69,999	457	10
£70,000 - £80,000	151	3
Total	4,358	100

Appeal Summary

22. A single judicial member has sat on 39 days during this reporting period to conduct the work associated with appeals.

Table 13 – Appeal Sitting Days by Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Appeal sitting days 2020-21	**0**	**0**	**13**	**22**	**35**
Appeal sitting days 2021-22	**28**	**33**	**41**	**47**	**149**
Appeal sitting days 2022-23	**50**	**44**	**46**	**39**	**179**
Appeal sitting days 2023-24	**23**	**19**	**19**	**12**	**73**
Appeal sitting days 2024-25	**7**	**6**	**5**	**8**	**26**
Appeal sitting days 2025-26	**8**	**10**	**16**	**5**	**39**
Total Appeal sitting days					**501**

23. As at 31 March 2026, the Redress Board has received a total of **762** Notices of Appeal over 6 years of which **738** appeals have been considered. Of these **738** reconsidered appeals by a single judicial member, **241 were upheld**, and **497 dismissed** confirming the panel decision. The remaining **22 were withdrawn** and **2** appeals are currently being processed.

(At the end of quarter 1 in the 2026-27 reporting year both appeals had been determined)

Summary of average processing timescale

24. The Redress Board has an aspiration to have **compliant applications** listed before a panel within **28 weeks of receipt of the application.** However, this cannot be a Performance Target due to the complexities of the Rule 7 verification process and the compliance with necessary Rule 8 & 9 information requests made by Redress Board during the validation process. These are outside the operational control of the Redress Board administration. The average processing time achieved for a **compliant application, from receipt to listing before a panel in 2025/26 was 16 weeks.**

Over the six-year period from 2020-2021 to 2025-2026, the average processing time achieved for a compliant application, from receipt to listing before a panel, was within 14 weeks.

25. The Redress Board has an aspiration to have **applications for redress listed before a panel within 8 weeks of validation of the application.** For clarity an application is considered validated when the applicant or solicitor has provided all the relevant Rule 4 statutory required documents, all the evidence they wish a panel to consider, and that the attendance as reported by an applicant at an institution(s) has been sufficiently verified in accordance with the legislation. **The average listing time achieved for validated applications for 2025/26 was 23 working days.**

Over the six-year period from 2020/21 to 2025/26, validated applications were listed in an average of 23 working days.

26. The reconsideration of appeals, which do not raise preliminary matters, took on average **21 working days** in 2025-26 compared to **16 working days** in 2024-25. However, there were several appeals in which the solicitor sought to introduce fresh evidence or request an oral hearing. In many of these "*preliminary matter appeals*" the instructing solicitor had failed to detail the exceptional circumstances as part of the Notice of Appeal delaying the progression of the appeal by up to 8 weeks due to the delay in responding to the provisions of Rule 9. On average "*preliminary matter appeals*" took **37 working days** to progress in 2025/26 compared to **55 working days** in 2024/25.

Over the six-year period from 2020/21 to 2025 the reconsideration of appeals took on average 35 working days.

GOVERNANCE

27. The Redress Board is a body corporate and operates independently and at arms' length from the Executive Office under a Partnership Agreement, which explains the overall governance framework within which the Redress Board operates and provides the necessary governance assurances. The partnership is based on a mutual understanding of strategic aims and objectives, clear accountability, and a recognition of the distinct roles each party plays.

28 The President has established a Management Board to provide effective leadership and strategic direction of the Redress Board, and to ensure that the policies and priorities set by the President and the Executive Office Ministers are implemented. The Management Board is responsible for ensuring that effective and proportionate governance arrangements are in place and that there is an internal control framework, which allow risks to be effectively identified and managed. The Management Board also sets the culture and values of the Redress Board and reviews business performance against the Redress Board Annual Business Plan and Risk Register.

29. The Redress Board also operates a Panel Members' Training & Insight Committee to meet the training needs of panel members – particularly important given the complexities and sensitivities involved, as well as the continuous aspiration towards quality and consistency. It should be noted that panel members are wholly independent in the performance of their decision-making duties.

30. As a public authority the Redress Board is committed to reviewing its practices to reflect high quality input and identify where improvements can be made. The quality assessment practices and controls that we implement are designed to test standards in operational procedures and panel member decision-making. The Redress Board Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement Guide provides an overarching whole system approach, where standards are set, monitored, and communicated collaboratively to make sure quality is delivered in our procedures and decision-making.

31. TEO has established an Accountability & Liaison Group, attended by senior Executive Office and Redress Board officials where key governance and operational matters are discussed in accordance with the Partnership Agreement and Financial Services Level Agreement. DoJ officials are also invited to attend for particular agenda items.

32. The Redress Board wishes to acknowledge the support provided by TEO and DoJ in providing services to the Redress Board in accordance with the Partnership Agreement and under Schedule 1 of the Act.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

33. Tables 14 to 17 provide a breakdown of the **£16,778k** Redress Board expenditure for 2025-26 financial year. *Please note as these figures are provisional subject to NIAO audit of TEO accounts.*

34. Table 14 below details the value of awards accepted by applicants during the period and paid directly into an appropriate bank account.

Table 14

Redress payments made	**Amount (£k)**
Redress Payments made	**14,008**

35. Table 15 details the amount of legal cost paid by the Redress Board to legal representatives during the period in accordance with the Table of Costs detailed in the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board (applications & Appeals) Rules (NI) 2019 and expenses in connection with obtaining expert reports.

Table 15

Application Legal Costs & Outlay	**Amount (£k)**
Legal costs paid to solicitors	**268**
Solicitor/applicant outlay & expenses	**130**
Total	**398**

Only 3% of applicants chose not to engage the services of a solicitor.

36. Table 16 details the amount of panel costs.

Table 16

Panel Fees	**Amount (£k)**
Total	**889k**

37. Table 17 provided a breakdown of the administrative and operational running costs of the Redress Board during the period.

Table 17

Administration costs	Amount (£k)
Staffing	949
Accommodation	178
IT Costs	107
Miscellaneous	36
NICTS Management Fee	99
Total	**1369**

COMPLAINTS

38. The Redress Board is committed to providing a high-quality service. One of the key aspects of demonstrating this commitment is a robust and effective complaints procedure, which addresses any customer dissatisfaction fairly, comprehensively and with a view to early resolution.

39. The complaints procedure allows customers to report when they are unhappy with the quality of service provided and receive resolution where appropriate. The policy is available on the Redress Board website.

40. The Redress Board complaints policy is reviewed annually. The Complaints Procedure reflects the NI Civil Service approach to managing complaints and is a two-stage process. Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the response following this second stage, they can raise the complaint with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

41. The Management Board monitors the progress of all complaints to ensure compliance with procedures, including adherence to the timescales contained within the policy, potential improvements to service and to ensure the Redress Board operates a transparent and consistent complaints system, with all complaints being treated fairly.

42. Table 18 below sets out the number of complaints received by the Redress Board since it was established and the outcomes. The Redress Board has responded to all complaints within the timescales set out in our Complaints Procedure

Table 18

Year	Number of Complaints received by type	Outcome of Complaints
2020-21	Delay – 2 Communications – 1 **Total - 3**	Delay – 2 dismissed Communications – 1 dismissed
2021-22	0	0
2022-23	Delay - 2 Outcome -2 **Total - 4**	Delay – 2 dismissed Outcome – 2 outside scope of Complaints Procedure
2023-24	Outcome -3	Outcome – 2 outside scope of Complaints Procedure.

	Total - 3	1 - Partially upheld.
2024-25	0	0
2025-26	Total - 1	Outcome – outside of scope of the complaint's procedure

ADDENDUM TO THE ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Background

The Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019 received Royal Assent on 5 November 2019. The Act provides the legal framework for the establishment of the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board.

The Redress Board was established on 31 March 2020, and it was responsible for receiving and processing applications for compensation from those who experienced abuse in residential institutions in Northern Ireland between 1922 and 1995.

Applications were considered by paper determination by a three-person panel consisting of a judicial member and two non-judicial members from a health and social care background. The judicial member was the chair of the panel.

The Executive Office (TEO) was required to name a Northern Ireland department to carry out the administrative functions of the Board and as such the Department of Justice (DoJ) is the designated department. The Redress Board is a 'body corporate' and operates independently from the DOJ and TEO.

To be eligible to apply for redress applicants must confirm that;

- they suffered abuse while a child and resident in an institution in Northern Ireland for a period of time between 1922 and 1995 inclusive: and/or
- they were sent to Australia under the Child Migrant Programme.

The HIA Redress Board also accepted applications on behalf of someone who died on, or after, 28 April 1953 as defined in section 6 of the Act.

The Act also defines the amounts of compensation that the Redress Board can award. These amounts are:

1. A standard award payment of £10,000 only;
2. An enhanced award payment of between £10,001 and £80,000; and
3. An amount of £20,000 if the application is made by or in respect of a person who was sent to Australia under the Child Migrant Programme.

It is important for any publicly funded scheme to be the subject of a proportionate, post project evaluation, for the purposes of transparency but also to provide insight into the internal learning experiences that may add value to bodies and organisations, who in the future, may seek to establish schemes of similar purpose, and who will wish to replicate the good practice principles within the HIA Redress Board.

It is for the Executive Office, as the sponsor department of the HIA Redress Board, to prepare the post project evaluation report but it is important that the Board contributes to that exercise by reflecting upon its unique experiences from the establishment to the management and the determination of almost 5500 applications.

The observations below are intended to identify lessons learned and good practices demonstrated in the establishment and operation of the HIA Redress Board that may assist policy makers and public bodies tasked with the design of similar redress schemes in the future.

1. Continuous Improvement

The President is responsible for the effective and efficient discharge of the Boards functions. To that end each President has been resolute in adopting the most efficient of process models for the benefit of applicants by delivering determinations and payment of awards at pace. The process model was developed at an early stage in consultation with representatives of the victim and survivor groups with the support of the Interim Advocate for Victims and Survivors, the late Mr Brendan McAlister, including the fundamental aspects of the application process. This collaborative approach ensured their needs and perspectives remained central to the design and accessibility considerations.

Once established, the Board's procedures were kept under regular review, with the policy of continuous improvement being central to its business model. Performance was monitored every month, and a Key Business Performance Summary was published on a quarterly basis for transparency and also to manage the expectations of applicants and legal representatives. This report was also shared with the Board's sponsor department to assist with queries relating to Machinery of Government.

The Board was timely in its response to trends or behaviours that introduced unnecessary delay for applicants, or which redirected the resources of the Board to less efficient practices. In early 2022 the Board conducted an in-depth review of its procedures to address the ongoing and frustrating trend of non-compliant applications being submitted. The result being a shift in practice that maximised the symmetry of procedures and practices with the powers of the Act. This reduced the number of non-compliant applications at year end by 85%, from 192 in 2020-21 to 28 in 2023-23. The time taken to comply with directions of the Board under Rule 8 and 9 also significantly improved.

The ability to be agile in this way was key to the achievement of our annual performance targets and in reducing the time an applicant must engage with the redress process in order to have their application determined. Responding to feedback and adapting practices accordingly demonstrated our commitment to continuous improvement across the work of the Redress Board.

2. A survivor centred approach

The voices of victims and survivors who have applied for redress have been central to the work of the Redress Board. Throughout, it has been our responsibility to ensure that each has been treated with dignity, care, and sensitivity. Equally important has been the appliance of a trauma-informed approach at each stage of the process, ensuring that our communications with applicants were not only accurate, but also respectful and sensitive to their lived experiences. This was particularly pertinent in the detailed summary of reasons produced by Redress Board panels, which set out the reasoning behind a decision either to make an award or on occasion not to make an award, where great care was taken to carefully explain how the evidential threshold had not been met.

The Board would suggest the detailed summary of reasons produced at the determination phase of a valid application was a crucial aspect of the redress process for applicants, aiding their understanding of how their evidence was taken into account by an independent panel and how the award decision was reached using the banding guidance, which was also published on the website of the HIA Redress Board to provide insight into the decision making process.

The Redress Board received very low numbers of complaints or negative feedback over six years about any aspect of its performance, and this reflects positively on the value of adopting a survivor centred approach that is seen to be fair, transparent and consistent. The receipt of positive feedback was both welcomed and reassuring. Those victims and survivors who provided feedback confirmed they had received valuable support from the Redress Board throughout their application for redress and a number of solicitors and the Child Migrants Trust reported they found the process to be straightforward.

3. The Digital Business Model

The Redress Board was tasked with becoming operational within a few short months, at the height of the pandemic and during lockdown. It was enabled in this challenge by the development of a digital model of working, including a solicitors online application portal and underpinned by a suite of robust processes. The Redress Board took advantage of the pre-existing NICS Digital Toolkit Components to quickly deliver an online application form and supporting database that allowed applications to be submitted without delay despite the restrictive environment created by the pandemic. This tool proved crucial to the management of applications in a timely and efficient manner throughout the life of the scheme, reducing the need for resource intensive activity associated with typical paper-based systems.

Applications were submitted through the portal alongside supporting evidence including evidence mandated under the provisions of Rule 4, while digital messaging services reduced pressure on both the Redress Board and solicitors.

This digital first model facilitated online panel hearings which were supported by electronic evidence files, reducing resource overheads considerably and preventing the emergence of considerable backlogs which the lockdown would inevitably have caused if an in-person panel model had been pursued. Deploying a digital business model allowed the Redress Board to deliver meaningful and real time benefits to both applicants and public services.

4. Fairness and consistency

The decision-making process has been consistent and rigorously applied throughout the scheme by independent panels consisting of a judicial chair and 2 professional non-judicial panel members, both experts in the field of health and social services. Feedback from all panel members and the Management Board, emphatically endorsed the multi-disciplinary composition of HIA Redress Board panels which were considered as constructive and well-balanced environments where the diverse range of expertise and experience were valued components of the decision-making process.

The importance of panels acting independently of government cannot be overstated and this was emphasised to applicants from the outset of the redress process. Maintaining visible operational and decision-making independence helped reinforce applicant confidence in the fairness and integrity of the redress process. Key success factors also included panel numbers being maintained at sufficient levels throughout the scheme allowing the Redress Board to be agile in its response to rising demand at peak times including the spike of cases towards the end of the scheme. The consistency of decision making was monitored by the Management Board and a dedicated Training and Insight Committee, who were responsible for the ongoing training of panel members particularly in complex areas and to proactively respond to feedback shared with the Redress Board to ensure continuous learning and improvement was valued and implemented. As a model of best practice Appeal decisions of the Single Judicial Member were also routinely shared with panel members.

5. Availability of wider support services

In all its correspondence with applicants and their legal representatives the Redress Board signposted applicants to the wider support services available to them. It was important to remain acutely aware of the potential for re-trauma as applicants navigated the redress scheme and attempted to recall events, from many years ago with childhood memories often shaped by trauma. The Redress Board acknowledges the non-statutory support services provided by Victim & Survivor Services (VSS) and subsequently Wave for applicants of the Redress Board who no doubt will have benefited greatly. It is also acknowledged that support services remain available after scheme closure as the need for support still remains for some applicants. However, the Redress Board would suggest that future schemes should benefit from the provision of wider support services being available before the opening date of a scheme, when the promotion process is underway.

Although outside the remit of the Redress Board, it was observed that thoughtful planning is required on the timing, method and scale of the promotion of any scheme in order to maximise public and wider social service awareness.

6. Access to historical records

The Inquiry Report (the Hart Report) findings were published in January 2017 and made recommendations for the establishment of a wide ranging `Redress Scheme' to include the establishment of a financial redress scheme and Redress Board. To that end the Redress Board became operational three years later on 20 March 2020.

The Redress Board consistently returned to the detailed research and findings of the Hart Report pertaining to the 22 institutions that it investigated. Having access to such an instructive and rich source of information has been extremely advantageous in completing detailed investigative work and for panels who have benefited from its historical context and the detailed analysis of its many findings.

Having timely access to historical records has been the lynchpin in verification of residence of applicants in institutions across Northern Ireland. The Redress Board made over one thousand investigative inquiries and issued over 9400 Rule 7 Notices to over 150 institutions.

Securing access to historical records and to benefit from the lawful sharing of relevant records required advance negotiation and at times formal information sharing agreements with external bodies such as PRONI, The Heath Social Care Trust, PSNI and other institutional archives. Future schemes will want to consider the benefits of early investment in information governance arrangements that may reduce delays during the operational phase. The Redress Board is extremely grateful for the support of all such bodies and organisations who have assisted willingly and co-operatively and without whom the verification and determination of applications would no doubt have prolonged the redress process for many applicants.

7. Effective collaboration

Throughout its operation the Board benefited from clear governance arrangements, well-defined statutory responsibilities and strong working relationships with sponsor departments and delivery partners. While operational independence was carefully maintained, effective collaboration allowed risks and emerging pressures to be identified and addressed promptly. A key lesson for future schemes is that independence and working in partnership are not mutually exclusive but complementary features of effective public service delivery.