

**MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH SENTENCING COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**29 JANUARY 2026, VIA TEAMS**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**Members present:** Dr Jay Gormley (chair)  
Sheriff Iain Fleming

**Secretariat:** Nicole Vidal (principal research officer)  
Hannah Downey (senior research officer)  
Jane Rice (senior policy officer)

**Apologies:** Sheriff Louise Arrol KC

**1. Proceedings**

*Welcome and introductions [Oral]*

- 1) The Chair opened the meeting and the Committee noted that Sheriff Louise Arrol KC had tendered apologies.
- 2) The Committee agreed that papers should be treated as private.
- 3) The Committee noted that, depending on the date of the next meeting, this may be the final Research Committee meeting of Sheriff Iain Fleming prior to the conclusion of his term as a Council member. The Committee thanked Sheriff Fleming for his commitment and contribution.

*Item 1.1: Minutes of previous meeting [paper 1.1]*

- 4) The minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2025 were approved.

Item 1.2: Progress of actions since last meeting [paper 1.2]

- 5) An update on actions from previous meeting was provided. The Committee noted the update.

## 2. RESEARCH UPDATES

Item 2.1: Research update [Papers 2.1 and 2.1A-B]

- 6) The Committee considered papers 2.1 and 2.1A-B which were, respectively an update of the current research projects, the final report on Exploring Unwarranted Disparities in Sentencing, and a proposal for hosting postgraduate student placements.
- 7) The Committee noted the declaration of the Chair's interest as co-author to Paper 2.1B as per section 5 of the Council's [Standing Orders](#).
- 8) The Committee discussed the need for timely outputs of research data, noting that the majority of secretariat work is dependent on SCTS and access to data. The Committee discussed various datapoints of interest and noted the update.
- 9) The Committee noted the updates provided in the papers and agreed that the Secretariat proceed with plans for hosting a postgraduate student on temporary placement if a successful candidate is recruited.
- 10) The Chair discussed the idea of developing a research plan/strategy within the Council. The Committee considered approaches to promoting engagement with the Council's research among Sheriffs and the judiciary.

### ACTION POINT

***AP1: Secretariat to invite the SCTS Management Analysis and Information team to the next Committee meeting.***

***AP2: Secretariat to share the final report on Exploring Unwarranted Disparities in Sentencing with Council members and prepare the document for publication.***

***AP3: Secretariat to liaise with SCTS to discuss postgraduate student placement processes.***

***AP4: Secretariat to prepare a draft strategy for Committee consideration and further development.***

*Item 2.2: Understanding the operation of PASS – sentencing data summary [Papers 2.2 and 2.2A]*

11) Jane Rice provided an update on the initial findings from the first phase of the quantitative research conducted into the operation of the presumption against short sentences (PASS). The Committee noted this update.

### **3. GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW**

*Item 3.1: Sentencing young people – 3-year review [Papers 3.1 and 3.1A]*

12) Nicole Vidal provided an update on the 3-year review of the ‘Sentencing young people’ guideline. The Committee noted the update and considered areas of interest for the qualitative elements of the review.

*Item 3.2: Public perceptions qualitative research [Papers 3.2 and 3.2A-C]*

13) The Committee considered Papers 3.2 and 3.2A-C on the publication and communication strategy for the second National Survey on Public Perceptions of Sentencing, including a proposal for qualitative research on public perceptions. The Committee noted the update and agreed for the secretariat to proceed with development of qualitative public perceptions research.

## **ACTION POINT**

***AP5: Secretariat to revert to the Committee with the next stage of the research proposal.***

#### **4. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

*Item 4.1: Future meeting dates [Oral]*

14) The Committee agreed to confirm next meeting date by correspondence.

#### **ACTION POINT**

***AP6: Secretariat to liaise with committee regarding next meeting date by correspondence.***

#### **5. AOCB**

*Item 5.1: AOCB [oral]*

15) No further business discussed.

**Scottish Sentencing Council Secretariat**

**February 2026**