

Judiciary
of Scotland



Chamber President

First-tier Tribunal
For Scotland





Contents

- A foreword from the President of Scottish Tribunals
- History of the Scottish Tribunals
- Structure of Scottish Tribunals
- Role of a Chamber President
- The Social Security Chamber
- The Local Taxation Chamber
- Eligibility
- Legal, Personal and Judicial Qualities
- Application and Assessment Process
- Appointment and remuneration
- Message from Chamber President May Dunsmuir
- Induction, Training & Support
- Useful Links

A foreword from the President of Scottish Tribunals

Lady Wise



The business of the First-tier Tribunal within Scottish Tribunals is diverse and rewarding, from complex taxation and social security benefits cases to highly sensitive applications relating to children with additional support needs. Its judicial office holders decide cases that have a significant impact on many members of the public. A Chamber President leads each of the six Chambers of the First-tier, and has a range of responsibilities, both internal to the Chamber and with an external focus.

As President of Scottish Tribunals, I enjoy regular engagement with all of the Chamber Presidents, who keep me informed of major developments in their respective Chambers and to whom I provide strategic support. An exciting opportunity has arisen for those who are interested in securing one of two available senior leadership positions: Chamber President of the Social Security Chamber and Chamber President of the Local Taxation Chamber. The combination of deciding cases and managing and training a committed group of judicial office holders is both challenging and rewarding. Successful candidates will require to be creative and versatile in meeting the needs of the Chamber and maintaining its profile. While the responsibilities undertaken by Chamber Presidents are substantial, there is a spirit of collegiality and mutual support throughout the First-tier Tribunal.

It is a real privilege to hold office as President of Scottish Tribunals and to oversee the skill and dedication of the Chamber Presidents. I hope that you will apply to take on this special position of responsibility.

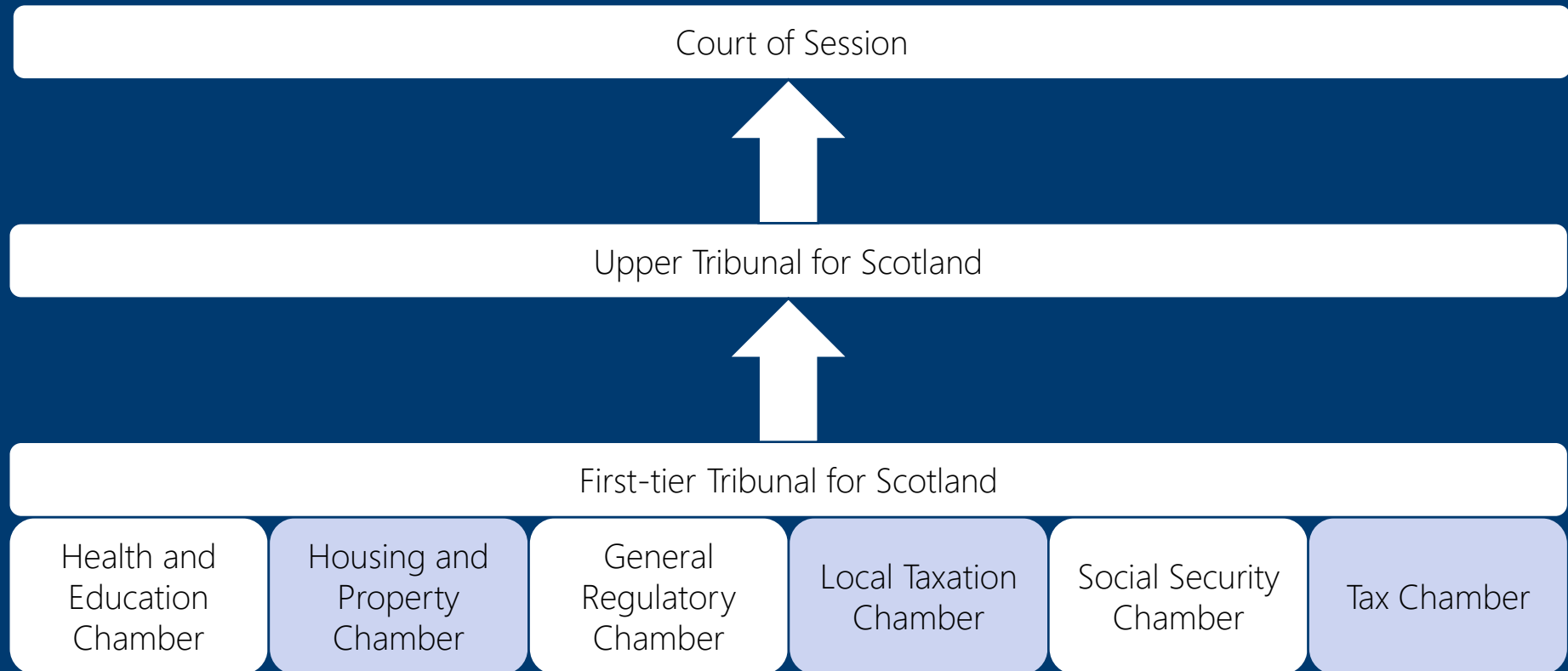
History of the Scottish Tribunals

The Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) created a statutory framework for the Tribunals in Scotland. The Act created two new Tribunals, the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland and the Upper Tribunal for Scotland, known collectively as the Scottish Tribunals. The First-tier Tribunal consists of a number of Chambers, each with its own jurisdiction and headed by a Chamber President.

The First-tier Tribunal for Scotland deals with first instance decisions. These are cases heard at a Tribunal for the first time.

The 2014 Act brings Tribunal appointments under the remit of the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland (JABS) and transfers administrative support of Tribunals to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS). Appeals from the First-tier Tribunal are heard in the Upper Tribunal. In certain circumstances, some matters can be appealed from the Upper Tribunal to the Court of Session.

Structure of the Scottish Tribunals



Role of a Chamber President

Leadership of Chamber

As Chamber President you have a key leadership role in developing, representing and promoting the Chamber's reputation and you will make a significant contribution to the strategic development of the Chamber by leading and managing change. You will work in close co-operation with the senior administration and Directors of the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) and senior judiciary, which include the Lord President and the President of Scottish Tribunals. Responsibilities include:

- Maintain judicial office holder competence and fitness for judicial office through the delivery of specialist training mentoring, quality assurance and welfare support.
- Maintain regular and effective relationships with stakeholders (including attendance at stakeholder events), author articles and deliver presentations about the Chamber at conferences, official functions and other events.
- May serve on SCTS and judicial committees; and the Judicial Appointments Board, as delegated by the President of Scottish Tribunals or the Lord President. May serve as a member of the SCTS Board.
- Liaison with the President of Scottish Tribunals, the Judicial Office and the Scottish Government on matters related to Tribunal reform.
- Liaison with the sponsor team in the Scottish Government and other officials of the Scottish Government on Chamber related matters, including considering and commenting upon proposals for legislative change and taking part in the process of procedural and substantive law reform.
- Engagement with the Judicial Institute in the delivery of all-Chamber training, partnership assessment of Chamber training, annual audit of Chamber training and contribution to the Judicial Institute Annual Report to the Lord President.

Continued on following two slides

Role of a Chamber President (continued)

Judicial Casework

As Chamber President you will provide specialist training, resources and support to judicial office holders on all relevant areas of the law. You will also sit on first-instance cases in the Chamber, including complex cases and cases raising novel points of law. You may also sit in the Upper Tribunal. Responsibilities include:

- Provide guidance, mentoring, peer review and tutoring to judicial office holders on areas of substantive law and procedure.
- When sitting at first-instance, responsibilities include:
- Chairing hearings and providing advice to other judicial office holders and assistance to parties on the legal issues arising, ensuring proceedings are fair.
- Ensuring parties who are not represented can effectively present their case, including unrepresented parties.
- Weighing up conflicting evidence and supporting other judicial office holders to reach an independent and well-reasoned decision.
- Draft any written decision, including findings in fact and reasons for the decision and ensure written decisions are produced promptly.
- and maintaining the Chamber's reputation as independent and accessible, providing a professional and expert service and to maintain and develop the reputation of the Scottish Tribunals.

Managing the work of the Chamber

As Chamber President you will preside over the work of the Chamber to ensure that the business is discharged efficiently and effectively in conformity with the Chamber's overriding objective. You will identify appropriate outcomes and implement processes and procedures to achieve this. Responsibilities include:

- Ensure suitably skilled and experienced judicial office holders are allocated to hear cases (including permissions to appeal or review), addressing availability challenges, while supporting the continuity of business.
- Ensure hearings are fixed within appropriate timescales and any written decisions are produced without delay.
- Develop, guide and manage the competence of judicial office holders (including legal knowledge, judge craft and decision writing) and provide mentoring and welfare support where appropriate.
- Prepare materials for judicial office holder training, including complex areas of law.
- Prepare Chamber guidance and directions to judicial office holders and information notes and guidance to parties.
- Plan the resource requirements of the Chamber, including participating in the process of recruitment and selection of new judicial office holders and advising the President of Scottish Tribunals on recruitment needs and judicial officer holder reappointments.
- Refer judicial conduct complaints and fitness issues to the Judicial Office and facilitate any enquiries and undertake investigations.

Role of a Chamber President (continued)

Working with others

As Chamber President you will regularly engage and work with judicial office holders, staff of the SCTS and senior judiciary. When sitting at first-instance you will work with other judicial office holders and foster strong collaborative and collegiate working. Responsibilities include:

- Regular engagement with judicial office holders, other Chamber Presidents, the President of Scottish Tribunals and staff of the SCTS and the Judicial Office.
- Regular meetings with SCTS operations staff to manage the flow of business and to agree processes and procedures.
- When sitting at first instance this will include advising judicial office holders on law and procedure and ensuring the special expertise of the tribunal is used appropriately and effectively at all times.
- Contribute to the President of Scottish Tribunals Annual Report on the performance of the Chamber.

The Judicial Office for Scotland has published guidance to Judicial office holders on Judicial Ethics. You will be required to comply with this guidance, which is available online at the [Judicial Office website](#).

The Social Security Chamber (SSC)

The Social Security Chamber was established in 2018. The principal office is in George House, Edinburgh. The Temporary Chamber President is Joy Hosie.

The Chamber hears appeals in relation to non-disability and disability cases including but not limited to:

- Best Start Grant;
- Pregnancy and Baby Payment;
- Early Learning Payment;
- School Age Payment;
- Funeral Support Payment;
- Young Carer Grant;
- Winter Hearing Assistance for Children and Young People;
- Scottish Child Payment;
- Child Disability Payment (CDP); and
- Adult Disability Payment (ADP).

Appeals relate to decisions on benefit entitlement made by Social Security Scotland and receives around 7000 new cases per year. In all types of hearings it is normal for a Presenting Officer from Social Security Scotland to attend. Scotland has historically had the highest rate of representation in the UK by the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Welfare Rights and other similar organisations. This appears to be continuing in the Chamber.

Since 2023 the Chamber has seen a significant rise in the number of appeals, particularly in respect of Adult Disability Payment (ADP) and Child Disability Payment (CDP).

The majority of hearings continue to be by telephone however facilities exist for Video link hearings and in-person hearings. The Social Security Chamber has venues throughout Scotland and where an appellant indicates that they would prefer an in-person hearing this will be facilitated wherever possible.

A Social Security Chamber tribunal is composed of a legal member, a medically qualified member and a disability qualified member for ADP and CDP appeals. In respect of most other benefits, these will be heard by a legal member sitting alone.

The Local Taxation Chamber (LTC)

The Local Taxation Chamber is based in Bothwell House, Hamilton. The Temporary Chamber President is Jacqui Taylor.

The Local Taxation Chamber consists of the Chamber President, legal members, ordinary members with surveyor rating experience and ordinary members with valuation experience.

The Chamber deals with around 1500 new cases per year. Most hearings are by video conference, however in-person hearings can be arranged on request. Non List council tax appeals, council tax reduction appeals and invalid council tax banding appeals are determined by a legal member sitting alone. All other appeals are heard by one legal member together with one or two ordinary members.

The functions of the Valuation Appeal Panels and Council Tax Reduction Review Panel were transferred to the Local Taxation Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal on 1st April 2023. The Local Taxation Chamber hears six types of appeals.

Non Domestic Rates Appeals

The Scottish Assessors are responsible for maintaining the non- domestic valuation roll and provide rateable values to the local authority. The Chamber hears appeals regarding entries made by Assessors to the valuation roll in respect of non-domestic properties.

Appeals against Council Tax Banding

The Scottish Assessors are responsible for maintaining the council tax valuation list, which contains information relating to each domestic property in a Local Authority area and for the issue of council tax completion notices for new domestic dwellings. The Chamber hears appeals regarding entries made by Assessors to the valuation list of domestic properties.

Non List Council Tax Appeals

The Chamber hears other council tax appeals such as the calculation of council tax liability, exemptions and discounts.

Water Charges Appeals

The Chamber hears appeals against a Local Authority decision that water charges are payable or the calculation of water charges liability.

Council Tax Reduction Appeals

The Chamber hears Council Tax Reduction appeals, but only after the Local Authority have reviewed their initial decision.

Civil Penalties

The Chamber hears appeals against the amount of a civil penalty imposed for failure to comply with Assessor information notices, failure to comply with Local Authority information notices and failure to notify changes in circumstances to the Local Authority.

Eligibility

Chamber Presidents are appointed by the Scottish Ministers in terms of [Section 22 of the Tribunals \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#).

The eligibility criteria for this appointment is contained in the Scottish Tribunals (Eligibility for Appointment) Regulations 2015 (regulation 5) made under [Schedule 5, part 2 of the Tribunals \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#).

You are eligible for appointment if:

5.—(1) A person is eligible for appointment as a legal member of the Upper Tribunal for Scotland under paragraph under paragraph 5(2) of schedule 5 to the Act if the person qualifies under paragraph (2).

(2) Subject to paragraph (5), a person qualifies under this paragraph, if the person has had—

- (a) previous engagement in practice for a period of not less than 7 years as a solicitor or advocate in Scotland; and
- (b) subsequent engagement in any of the activities listed in paragraph (3).

(3) The activities are—

- (a) exercising judicial functions in any court or tribunal;
- (b) practice or employment as a lawyer of any kind.

(4) The 7 year period referred to in paragraph (2)(a) (and the 7 year period referred to in paragraph 5(1) of schedule 5 to the Act) may be calculated on a cumulative or a continuous basis.

(5) A person is not to be treated as having satisfied paragraph (2)(a), if the person has been debarred from the person's professional body or if the person has been subject to any sanction that would have led to such debarment had the person not ceased to belong to the professional body.

The [Scottish Parliament \(Disqualifications\) Order 2020](#) also applies to this office.

A 'lawyer of any kind' includes solicitors, advocates and barristers working outside the Scottish jurisdiction who are able to evidence that they have practised as such.

Practice as solicitor includes lawyers who are not required to hold a practising certificate and where they are subject to the public official exception regarding a practising certificate in terms of section 24 of the [Solicitors \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)

Full provisions are available at the legislative hyperlinks provided above.

Application and Assessment Process

The Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland (JABS) is an independent non-departmental public body whose statutory role is to make recommendations to the Scottish Ministers for appointment for judicial offices under the provisions of the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008.

JAB's responsibilities under the 2008 Act are that:

- a) selection of an individual to be recommended for appointment must be solely on merit;
- b) the Board may select an individual only if it is satisfied that the individual is of good character; and
- c) in carrying out its functions, the Board must have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of individuals available for selection to be recommended for appointment to a judicial office. This is subject to the provisions a) and b) above.

Candidates will go through a holistic application process which tests the level of skill, experience and professionalism required to perform the duties of the office.

JABS encourages diversity and particularly welcomes applications from groups currently under-represented in the judiciary. The principles of fair and open competition will apply and recommendation for appointment will be made solely on merit.

Each applicant will be assessed against a set of skills and qualities which are necessary for the role:



Legal Personal and Judicial Skills Summary

In reaching its decision on making a recommendation for appointment, JABS will assess candidates through the application and interview process.

The following summarises the skills, abilities and characteristics required for the role of Chamber President, which will be tested during the process.

- In addition to their legal expertise, Chamber Presidents are expected to have sound leadership and management skills or to have the ability and aptitude to acquire and develop these in office.
- A Chamber President should have a high level of expertise in their own area of practice and a general knowledge of civil law (private and public) in Scotland. Underpinned by a thorough knowledge of Scots law of evidence, practice and procedure, the applicant will ideally have practical experience of the subject matter of the Chamber, although this is not essential. They must be able to deal effectively with new areas of law in which they are not expert, remain up to date with developments, and analyse and interpret complex evidence, case law and statute. Complex and challenging legal problems should be addressed with clear, well-reasoned decisions.
- The role requires the ability to think strategically and the ability to lead through complexity and change. It involves developing the Chamber, maintaining its reputation, judicial independence and standing. It is important to promote a collegiate, high-performing culture, whilst contributing to legislative reform and ongoing development.
- Candidates will need the skills to manage the Chamber's business efficiently, including scheduling hearings, issuing decisions without delay, and overseeing judicial availability and sitting allocations. Effective resource planning, mentoring, training and review of judicial office holders are essential, along with making strategic and operational decisions to manage risk, ensure good governance, and address sensitive matters such as judicial conduct and complaints.
- In judicial practice, the Chamber President should be able to lead by example, sitting on complex or novel cases at first instance and in the Upper Tribunal, guiding others through evolving areas of law, and chairing hearings to ensure fairness, procedural clarity and effective use of specialist expertise. They must balance a personal caseload with supporting colleagues to deliver proportionate, well-reasoned outcomes.
- Excellent judgement is vital, with the ability to make fair, impartial and well-structured decisions in both judicial and leadership contexts. Patience, respect in listening, and strong communication skills are required to produce written decisions, guidance and training materials that are clear, concise and timeous. A Chamber President must be able to explain complex legal matters in accessible language to diverse audiences, including unrepresented parties.
- The ability to work in a collegiate manner and to develop strong relationships with judicial office holders, other Chamber Presidents, the President of Scottish Tribunals, the Lord President, the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, the Judicial Office and administrative teams is essential. This is a demanding role requiring considerable personal resilience, balancing the efficient disposal of business with the management and support of judicial office holders.

Appointment and Remuneration

Fees and Expenses

The roles are paid on a daily fee basis. The current Chamber President of the Local Taxation Chamber total daily fee is £581.50 per day. The current Chamber President of the Social Security Chamber total daily fee is £622.17 per day. Travel and subsistence expenses will also be met in line with terms and conditions.

There is no requirement for applicants to reside in Scotland. It should be noted, however, that for members that are located outside of Scotland expenses will not be reimbursed for travel outside of Scotland.

Office Base

The Local Taxation Chamber is based in Bothwell House in Hamilton. The Social Security Chamber is currently based at George House in Edinburgh.

Time Commitment

The time commitment is expected to be in the order of 2 – 3 days per week, depending on the volume of work of the Tribunal. In addition, it is anticipated that there will be in the order of two days of mandatory training per year plus any Chamber specific additional training.

Period of appointment

By virtue of paragraph 4 of schedule 7 of the 2014 Act you will be appointed for an initial period of five years, following which you will then automatically be reappointed for periods of five years unless one of the conditions listed in paragraph 4(3) of Schedule 7 applies. You may decline automatic reappointment by providing one month's written notice to the Lord President that you do not wish to continue in post at the expiry of your current period in office.

Pursuant to the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993, you are required to vacate your office on the day on which you attain the age of 75.

A message from Chamber President May Dunsmuir - HEC



I started my career in both legal and parliamentary work with a national charity. This was during a time of transformational change in the Scottish legal landscape, which resulted in our now well embedded Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2003. Both of which introduced statutory principles designed to make the law person-centred.

Following that, I became a Children's Reporter, working in the field of juvenile justice and child protection. I appeared very regularly in the sheriff court in multiple grounds of referral proofs and time critical appeals related to place of safety warrants and child protection orders. It was during this time that the Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland (MHTS) emerged. Given my earlier work on the 2003 Act I was keen to see whether the aims of the law and the statutory principles would work in practice. Following a successful judicial appointment to the MHTS, a few years later I was appointed to the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland (ASNTS).

Without quite planning it, I now found myself concentrating entirely on my judicial career. I was the first of my family to attend University, from very proud working class roots. I had set my sights on using my legal skills to challenge injustice and to improve the rights of disadvantaged people, particularly children and young people and those who are care experienced. I realised that this was in tune with access to justice and the delivery of justice - both consistent with my judicial appointments.

I became President of the ASNTS in 2014 and then Chamber President of the Health and Education Chamber in 2018, when the ASNTS transferred in to the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland. The work of a Chamber President is challenging but immensely rewarding. A day in the life can include complex case work, preparing Guidance for HEC judiciary, supporting judicial office holders, including peer review on points arising in their cases and designing accessible hearings for children! There is never a dull day.

I have had the honour of consulting with children and young people over the years of my presidency to try to improve their hearing experience, to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation and to ensure we gain access to the best evidence. This is the area of work I find most enriching. Through their voice and co-design we have been able to introduce the sensory hearing concept into Scotland. The work of a Chamber President can be ground breaking.

I continue to sit on hearings and I often sit with two specialist judicial members with a background in education, health or social work. This is one of the great strengths of the specialist tribunal - the knowledge and expertise of its judiciary and I find this personally and professionally inspiring. My route to becoming a Chamber President is not a conventional one. I encourage anyone with an interest in the work of the expert and specialist tribunal and the delivery of person-centred justice, whatever their legal route, to apply to be a Chamber President.



Induction, Training and Support

Measures are in place during the early stages of a new member appointment. They are intended to provide support and reassurance to any new member and to accord with best practice. A newly appointed Chamber President will be offered the assistance and guidance of a mentor, drawn from among the other Chamber Presidents, to whom he or she can turn on a confidential basis for support in the early period of his or her appointment. A new Chamber President will also have the assistance and support of the other Chamber Presidents and have access to the advice and guidance of the President of Scottish Tribunals.

In addition to the above, the following are examples of what a new Chamber President could expect on appointment:

- Induction training including on Leadership
- Meeting operational and support staff from within the Chamber
- Sitting-in days to familiarise themselves with the judicial environment, to observe the work undertaken, and to have the opportunity to discuss how best to approach, and organise for, the challenges ahead
- Training with the Tribunal administration on familiarising with software used by members.
- Training on relevant legislation
- Lectures

Useful Links

Each Chamber has its own website which provides more information on the appeal types considered by each chamber. The websites include their own useful links such as links to relevant legislation or advice bodies.

Tribunal decisions and forthcoming hearings are also published on the individual websites.

- General Regulatory Chamber

www.generalregulatorychamber.scot

- Health and Education Chamber

www.healthandeducationchamber.scot

- Housing and Property Chamber

www.housingandpropertychamber.scot

- Local Taxation Chamber

www.localtaxationchamber.scot

- Social Security Chamber

www.socialsecuritychamber.scot

- Tax Chamber

<http://www.taxtribunals.scot/>

- Tribunals (Scotland) Act 2014

[Tribunals \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

- Scottish Tribunals Annual Report – 2023/24

[Scottish Tribunals Annual Report](#)



Judicial Office for Scotland
2025