

2016 - 19

Equality & Human Rights Commission



Catherine Turner
Human Rights Facilitator

EHRC Strategic Plan

Introduction





As I write the Human Rights and Equality Commissioners are being appointed. However it will be some weeks before they are in a position to produce their detailed Strategic Plan.

The Equality & Human Rights Commission Ordinance obliges the Commissioners to produce a Strategic Plan, informed by and agreed by public consultation and this is then to be presented to Legislative Council. This document is the one I will be presenting to the Commissioners when they start work on 19th October. It defines the baseline from which the Commission will work. This document will form the starting point for developing the Strategic Plan.

This work has been budgeted for this current financial year and will be completed by 31st March 2016.



The Equality and Human Rights Commission's objectives as defined in the ordinance are:

-  An individual's ability to achieve his or her potential is not limited by prejudice or discrimination;
-  There is respect for and protection of each individual's human rights;
-  There is respect for the dignity and worth of each individual;
-  Each individual has an equal opportunity to participate in society; and
(e) there is mutual respect between groups based on understanding and valuing of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights.

Where are we now?

Since the establishment of the Human Rights Office in late 2011 we have received over 300 queries from people who believe they have a human rights issue. This year has seen a rise in the number of issues raised. As the Commission becomes established the Commissioners will be working from a baseline that is indicating growing problems in the areas of employment, housing, health, an increasing number of people in debt and a large increase in complaints about the police.

In order to make an accurate assumption about the work the Commissioners will engage in, I have looked at the complaints over the last 3 years to establish which would have been passed to the Commissioners had we had them.

The number of people contacting the office has increased year on year

The number of queries is increasing year by year

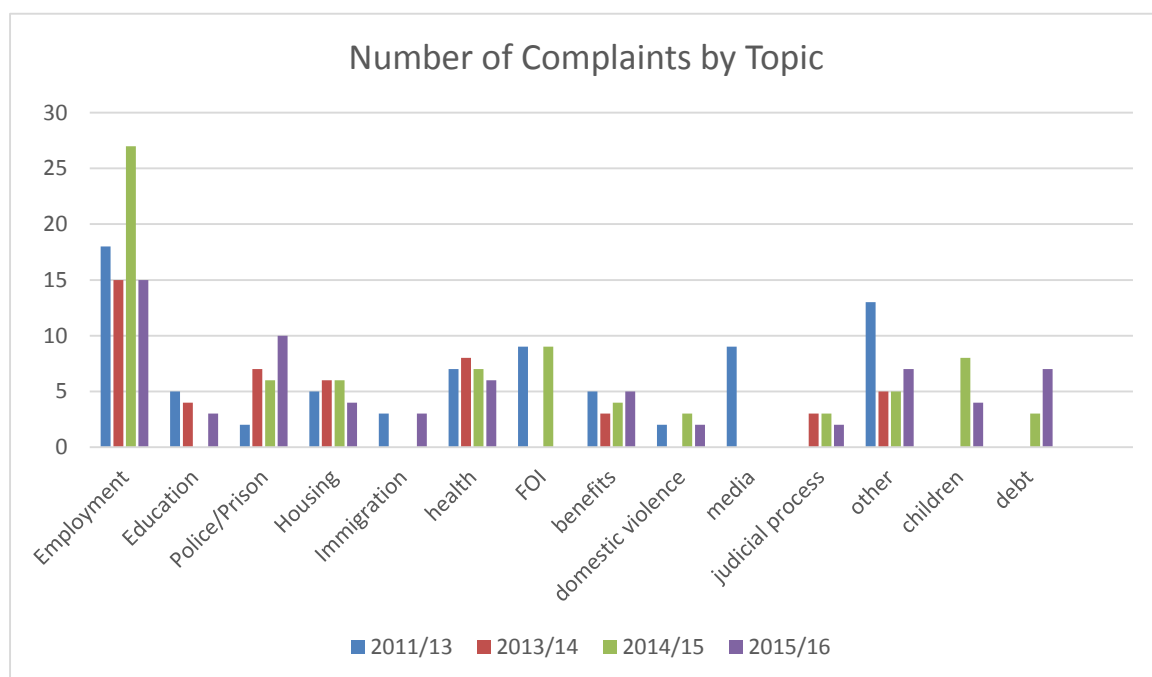
Year	Number of Queries
2011/12 (six months only)	8
2012/13	70
2013/14	51
2014/15	81
2015/16 (six months only)	68
Total	278

Not all queries were human rights issues but, as is demonstrated by the chart below, there were 278 contacts which were potential human rights issues of a nature that I would have discussed them with a Commissioner, had they been in place. All were genuine concerns and issues that impact on the lives and wellbeing often of the more vulnerable members of our community.

The Main facts demonstrated by this chart are

1. The majority of complaints are about employment these include
 - a. Lack of/Limited representation
 - b. Sexual Harassment
 - c. Bullying
 - d. Unfair/unconstructive dismissal
 - e. Maternity Rights
 - f. Equal Pay
2. Complaints about the police and prison have increased sharply. These include

- a. The use of pepper spray
 - b. Assaults
 - c. Use of improper use of body cameras
 - d. Stopping drivers who have not committed an offence
 - e. The curfew imposed on youngsters on a Saturday night.
3. There has been an increase in the number of people struggling with debt
- f. Several children are living in homes without electricity
 - g. People are facing eviction as they cannot pay their rent
 - h. Many are not taking their prescription medicine because they cannot afford to pay for it.

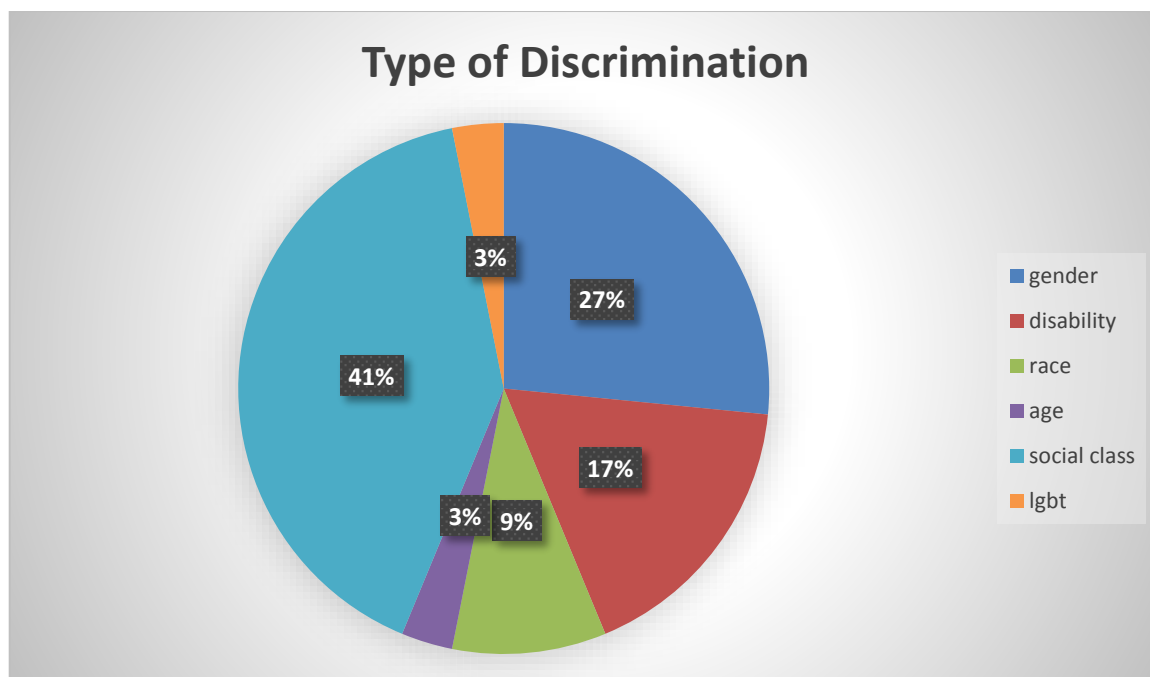


NB the 2015/16 figures are for 6 months only.

Discrimination

Over the last 4 years I have recorded the type of discrimination involved in each complaint (if any).

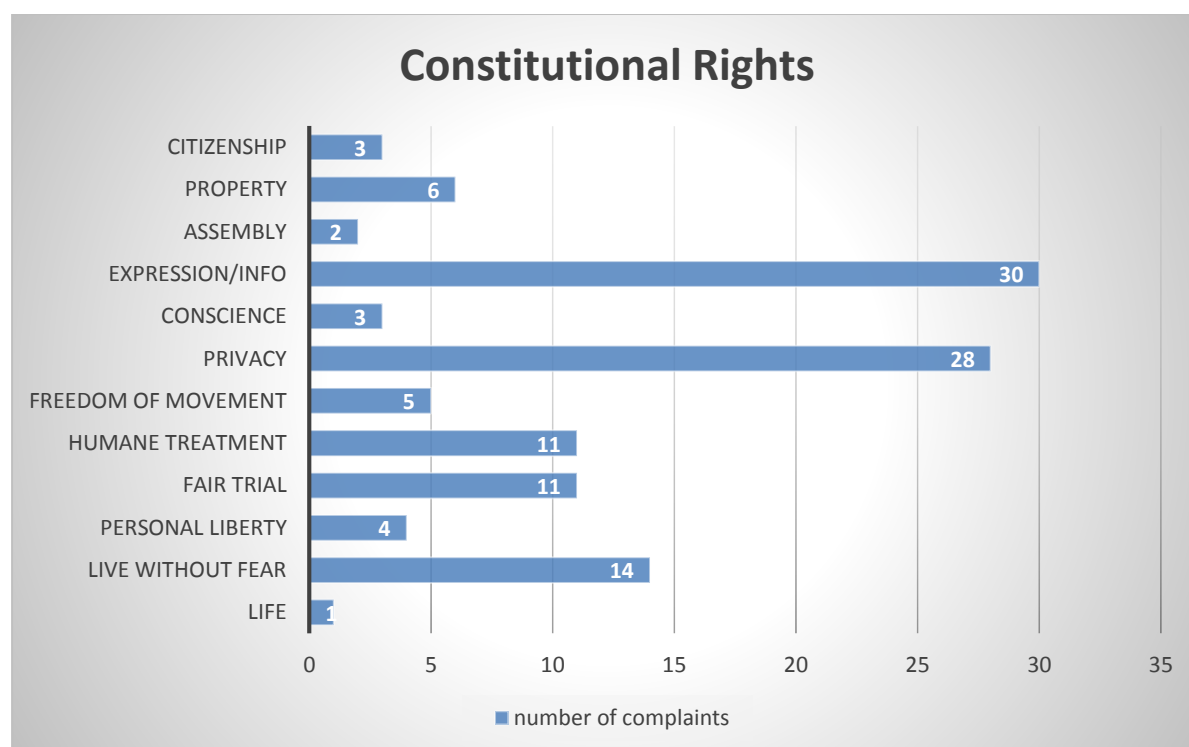
The results indicate problems around the treatment of women and the disabled but the biggest issue is the number of people who feel disenfranchised because of their position in the social hierarchy or victimised because of who they are.



Constitution

Finally I have broken the figures down into the areas of the rights protected by our Constitution.

The United Nations include all state run tribunals under the heading trial, therefore I have included SHG disciplinary/grievance/redundancy hearings under the heading of fair trial.



Work during 2015/16

During the rest of this financial year the Commissioners priorities will be:

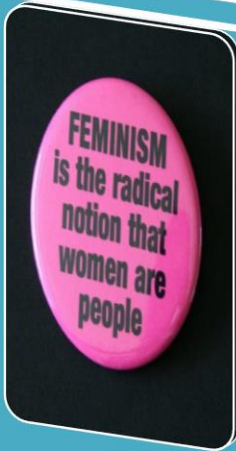
1. Establishing the Commission through
 - a. Publicising the Commission and its role to develop public awareness
 - b. Agreeing and establishing reporting systems
2. Developing the Equality and Human Rights Commission 3 year Strategic Plan through
 - a. Research
 - b. Wide public consultation
3. Dealing with whatever issues are brought to them by members of the public.
4. Personal training and development

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

Nelson Mandela



Work Plan for 2016/19 Key Work Areas



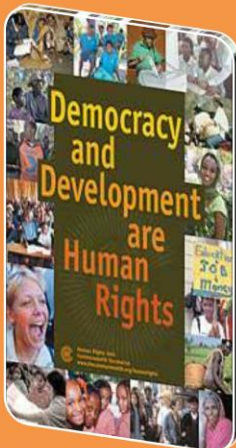
Equality & Diversity

- Promote the importance of equality & diversity
- Encourage good practice on Diversity
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote awareness of our rights
- Enforce the relevant Human Rights Instruments
- Work towards the elimination of all unlawful discrimination & harassment



Human Rights

- Promote an understanding of the importance of human rights
- Encourage good practice
- Promote awareness, understanding and protection of human rights
- Encourage public authorities to comply with Part 2 of Chapter 1 of The Constitution of St Helena.



monitoring laws
monitoring progress
giving advice
inquiries/investigations
Applications to Court

Where do we want to be?

The Equality and Human Rights Commission will

- Work towards the elimination of discrimination; and harassment.
- Encourage St Helena Government (SHG) to act on specific issues; reviewing and advising on new legislation and policies
- Be the statutory monitoring body required when the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is extended to St Helena
- Provide advice, education and training and undertake research on relevant issues;

REQUIRED FUNDING FOR HR&EC

	Year 2016/17	Year 2017/18	Year 2018/19	
Commissioners				
Retainer for 4 commissioners	4000	4000	4000	
Per Diem	4000	5000	6000	
Transport	1000	1000	1000	
Training	2000	1000	1000	
Office Staff				
Director	18000	20000	20000	
Admin assistant	3000	3000	3000	
Transport				
Training	1000	1000	1000	
Office/Running Costs				
Maintenance	500	1000	500	
Printing	1000	1000	1000	
Advertising	250	250	250	
Meetings/Public Promotion	1000	1000	1000	
Rent	3000	3000	3000	
Utilities	500	500	500	
Telephone & Internet	6000	6000	6000	
Library/subscriptions	500	500	500	
	45750	48250	48750	142750

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made

1. Four Commissioners paid as the magistrates are; a retainer and a per diem payment if they are required to work more than a specified number of days/hours.
2. £500 per year has been included for training costs for the Commissioners, it is envisaged that their time will be included in the retainer; the £500 will cover any training expenses.
3. Current Human Rights Facilitator becomes Director and carries out the majority of the training
4. Maintenance cost assumed by EHRC
5. Rent paid at current commercial rate (lease allows for rent review in 2020)
6. Full cost of utilities including meters paid by EHRC