

2025-  
2028

# Strategic Plan



## Purpose

Our purpose is to deliver to the people of St Helena a society that is fair and equitable. The EHRC will deliver this by informing our government of the human rights implications of proposed policy and legislation.



## People

We will work with community groups and individuals to understand the lived experience of human rights on St Helena and use our mandate to deliver focused work on poverty, protected groups, development of the new prison and access to justice.



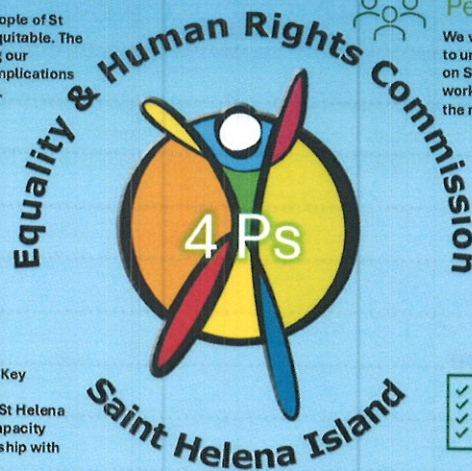
## Partnerships

We will work with government and Key stakeholders to increase their understanding of human rights on St Helena and use our mandate to develop capacity and a stronger voice in our partnership with UKG



## Performance

To be a learning organization, improving our skills to achieve the greatest impact



St Helena's Human Rights Champion

*Equality & Human Rights  
Commission*

2025-2028

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## Foreword from the Members of the Commission

This is the Equality & Human Rights Commission's fourth Strategic Plan. It will be laid before Legislative Council during the first available LegCo meeting following 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 for its information.

Our Strategic Plan sets out our aims and priorities for the next three years. It has been developed in a challenging environment for human rights on island, as in the wider world.

This year (2025) will see our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we are proud to say that in those 10 years we have played a role in some significant human rights advances, for example:

- Securing the rights of St Helenians to same-sex marriage,
- The extension of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- The concept of equal pay for women enshrined in law.
- Changes to the Conditions of Detention at HMP Jamestown.
- Acting as intervener in the Privy Council, securing a decision that St Helenians deserved the same rights as our fellow British citizens in the UK.

Yet evidence suggests that improved outcomes are not yet being felt where they matter most – in people's real lives, their lived experiences.

Housing conditions, poverty, social care and issues affecting people in the criminal justice system, particularly those with complex mental health problems, remain matters of acute concern.

The EHRC recognises the strains on public services and the cost-of-living crisis are widening the gap between the waged and the unwaged and public finance projections remain challenging.

This is underlined by the fact that, while Civil and Political rights are protected by our Constitution, nothing has been done to safeguard Economic, Social, and Cultural rights in our laws.

The need to advance enjoyment of rights, for instance, for disabled people, ethnic minority communities, and older people, is indisputable. We believe the EHRC has a crucial role to play here. However, we can only deliver effectively as the island's human rights champion if we have the resource we need.

The theme for the EHRC's 2025-28 Strategic Plan is **People, Partnerships, Purpose** and **Performance**. We plan to focus our resources on using our mandate to monitor more robustly and consistently how human rights are being experienced by the people of St Helena.

We will undertake more proactive work to spotlight areas of concern, and if necessary, request resources from the government to use our powers of inquiry or take legal action.

We will retain capacity to ensure that we can be responsive to emerging issues, but given the evidence available to the EHRC gathered over its 10 years, we have identified four areas that we will focus on closely:

- The impact of poverty on human rights
- Human rights in places of detention
- Access to Justice
- Rights to remedy for protected groups in particular the LBGTQ+ community and the disabled.

In advancing these themes, the EHRC is committed to working alongside individuals and groups, to document and bear witness to their experiences. We will listen and seek to help amplify their voices, and this will inform our work.

We will also continue to provide advice to The Government on human rights issues with proposed legislation and providing evidence to Select Committees where appropriate. We will seek to support public bodies concerning their duties under the Constitution of St Helena, Ascension & Tristan da Cunha 2009.

We will continue to report to the United Nations (UN) on how far the UK's international human rights commitments are being met for people of St Helena.

We will work to communicate effectively with our stakeholders in government, public bodies, civil society and across the legal community, and ensure our work is rooted where possible in data, evidence, the rule of law, and accessibility. This will help us to fulfil our mandate to educate people about their human rights, and duty bearers about their human rights obligations.

As their human rights champion, the EHRC will serve the people of St Helena by protecting and promoting all our human rights for the next three years and beyond.

The Commission is:

Chair	Kelly McDermott
Deputy Chair	Luke Bennett
Commissioners	Sarah Iguna
	Andrew Pearce
	Gareth Rhys
	Catherine Turner (Ex-officio)

Signed



Date 14/09/25

# The Equality & Human Rights Commission

## *St Helena's Human Rights Champion*

We are an independent, expert body working with and for the people of St Helena. We monitor, listen, speak up for our rights and respond when things go wrong.

The Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is a public body created by The Commission for Equality and Human Rights Ordinance, 2015 to protect and promote the human rights of all the people of St Helena.

The Commission must exercise its functions with a view to encouraging and supporting the development of a society in which—

- an individual's ability to achieve his or her potential is not limited by prejudice or discrimination.
- there is respect for and protection of everyone's human rights.
- there is respect for the dignity and worth of everyone.
- everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in society; and
- there is mutual respect between groups based on understanding and valuing of diversity and on shared respect for equality and human rights.<sup>1</sup>

The EHRC is working hard to become part of the international human rights system. The aim is to be the first BOT to be accredited by the United Nations (UN), giving St Helena a voice on the international stage.

We aim to comply with a set of standards called the UN Paris Principles. Their key pillars are diversity, independence and effectiveness.

### **The EHRC is independent of Government.**

You can read the Ordinance and the Paris Principles on our website at [www.sthenaehrc.org](http://www.sthenaehrc.org)

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission for Equality and Human Rights Ordinance, 2015, clause 5.



## What does the EHRC do?

- Monitor how human rights are being experienced in people's everyday lives on St Helena
- Highlight gaps and areas of concern where people's human rights are not being met
- Be an expert, objective and independent authority on human rights
- Check if what the Constitution, Ordinance and policies say should happen is happening
- Help people understand their human rights and how to access them.
- Report to the United Nations, UK Government and St Helena Government on areas of concern
- Help government and statutory bodies understand their duties to uphold people's human rights and help them learn how to do this
- Help our government make good decisions about the impacts of the legislation it passes on the human rights of all the people on St Helena
- Protect those in the criminal justice system from abuse of power
- Conduct investigations & inquiries into areas of concern.



## Our Commitment

### **As a public body, we will always:**

- Make sure we deliver the best value for money for the people of the island
- Deliver our work to the highest quality
- Demonstrate the impact of our work
- Make our work accessible to all
- Work with others to achieve our joint aims

### **As a National Human Rights Institution, we will always:**

- Maintain independence from the state
- Ensure that we have a pluralist membership of the EHRC, representing different experiences and the breadth of democratic society in our consideration of human rights issues
- Ground our work in evidence and human rights standards



## How was this plan developed?

As required by Section 6 of our Ordinance, the EHRC has carried out research and consulted with stakeholders as follows:

- We have reviewed our data base of client contacts for the last 5 years.
- We reviewed available evidence including treaty monitoring cycles, particularly the
  - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (2019/20);
  - the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (2022/23)
  - Our previous reports.
- We have spoken at length to current clients about the issues they face.
- Carried out qualitative research into gender issues on island.
- We engaged with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and other National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) including the HRC for Northern Ireland.
- Commissioners and staff participated in a strategy away day in February 2025.
- Used knowledge gained through networking and attendance at working groups, and meetings of statutory bodies.
- Talked to Elected Members.

The Draft Plan was sent to stakeholders and published online for feedback and comment

## Purpose, Vision, Mission and Values

### Our Purpose

#### We are St Helena's human rights champion

Our job is to work with people to understand their experiences, hold public bodies to account where human rights are not upheld, and help them to do better

### Our Vision

Is for a fair, safe and inclusive St Helena where every person is treated with dignity and respect.

### Our Mission

Is to work with and influence law and policy makers, organisations, groups and individuals to protect and promote human rights in St Helena, allowing everyone an equal opportunity to reach their full potential

### Our Values

The Commission delivers its work through the lens of a human rights-based approach, known as the

#### PANEL principles

- **Participation**
- **Accountability**
- **Non-discrimination and equality**
- **Empowerment**
- **Legality**

Our values bring this to life.



## How we work

### Our approach

The EHRC is established by Ordinance as a National Human Rights Institution. We are independent of government.

It is the job of National Human Rights Institutions to use the law to promote and protect the human rights of all the people who live in any given country and assess the actions of the state on that basis. This is how the EHRC approaches its work.

The EHRC uses data and evidence to understand human rights problems in St Helena. Where necessary, it undertakes new research where it is clear there are gaps.

We influence decision making to ensure that proposed law on our island meets human rights standards, and we have the powers to intervene in legal cases to make the law clearer.

We provide information, advice and guidance to improve compliance with the law.

The EHRC is based on international human rights standards, examining the human rights in relation to a particular issue or proposed legislation that has been presented by the Ministers.

We look at existing law to understand how this has been interpreted through the courts and how this may have a bearing on human rights protections here.

We will also be informed by the experiences of people in the places where their human rights are being upheld or denied.

We then identify any recommendations for government to consider. We also make recommendations on the actions it should take to better uphold the human rights affected.

Our job is to make sure that everyone's human rights have been fully considered and upheld. Our analysis and advice is publicly available for civil society and decision makers to use and consider.

However, in our work to monitor human rights denials, we will always firmly take the side of the people of St Helena and hold government to account.

### Our Priorities

We have a broad mandate and a small team, so we often have to make very tough decisions about where to focus our time and resources. Our priority is to ensure that

- The EHRC's advice and research influences decision-makers to take actions that progress the protection and enjoyment of human rights. We respond to Government consultations on decisions which have an impact on human rights.
- Law and policy makers at all levels, consider and address the human rights impacts identified through our advice, research, investigations and reports.
- Our focus is on informing the scrutiny of proposed legislation
- The EHRC will be vocal in its calls for legislation to protect human rights for example

- Modern Slavery protections
  - Domestic abuse legislation that protects from all forms of abuse including coercion.
  - Legislation that protects our Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
- The EHRC's promotional activities increase understanding and awareness of human rights on island.
- The EHRC's education activities increase the capability of individuals, communities and organisations to promote and protect human rights.
- The EHRC delivers effective support to individuals and groups who seek assistance for reported human rights violations and abuse.
- The EHRC delivers continuous improvements in accordance with its mandate and the Paris Principles (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 48/134) to achieve accreditation.
- Staff and Commissioners gain knowledge and skills that improve effectiveness and efficiency.
- The EHRC has good corporate governance, effective systems and arrangements in place to provide assurance on risk management and internal control

Every year, we will consider the evidence we have around potential violations and denials of rights, as well as the legislative programme. We will consider evidence available to the EHRC through our treaty monitoring work and if known, the government's legislative programme

We will use this approach to decide how best to use the EHRC's resources, which were £84k in 2023/24. The EHRC will assess:

- Whether new or planned work aligns with our strategic priorities.
- The evidence available to confirm the scale and severity of the problem.
- The potential for having a systemic and lasting impact.

We will work collaboratively with other public and third sector bodies who may be able to implement changes that progress our findings.

We will share our recommendations with government

Given our limited resource, we must plan to be flexible too, in order that we can maintain capacity to respond to issues which emerge and develop over the course of this strategic plan.

## Strategic objectives 2025-28

### Purpose



***Our purpose is to deliver to the people of St Helena a society that is fair and equitable. The EHRC will deliver this by informing our government of the human rights implications of proposed policy and legislation.***

### People



***We will work with community groups and individuals to understand the lived experience of human rights on St Helena and use our mandate to deliver focused work on poverty, protected groups, development of the new prison and access to justice.***

### Partnerships



***We will work with government and Key stakeholders to increase their understanding of human rights on St Helena and use our mandate to develop capacity and a stronger voice in our partnership with UKG***

### Performance



***To be a learning organization, improving our skills to achieve the greatest impact***





## Purpose

To deliver to the people of St Helena a society that is fair and equitable. The EHRC will deliver this by informing our government of the human rights implications of proposed policy and legislation.

To deliver against this objective we will:

- Keep under review law and practice that impacts on the protection of human rights on island.
- Provide advice to government on the human rights risks in and protections afforded by proposed legislation.
- Place a particular focus on strengthening the human rights legal framework on island by influencing and scrutinising openness, transparency and democracy on St Helena.
- Engage with the United Nations treaty monitoring cycles and communicate this work to the people of St Helena.
- Pursue interventions in cases progressing through the St Helena courts on issues which impact on the human rights of people in St Helena.
- We may ask government for the resource to use our current power of inquiry.

We will advocate for the EHRC's effectiveness as an NHRI, building on learning from international NHRIs to strengthen accountability for human rights on island.

Progress will be measured by the number of times the EHRC

- Participates in working groups or regular engagement with government, legislature and other public bodies.
- Provides government and other public authorities with advice or publishing research (upon request or unsolicited)
- Engages with civil society organisations seeking advice from the EHRC or in engagement with campaigns and support
- Provides written or oral evidence to Select Committees or officials (or similar)
- Engages by public authorities with the EHRC's training and education programmes
- Has its advice and recommendations reflected in legislative processes (including amendments to Bills)
- Is cited in reports and letters from public bodies reflect the EHRC's advice
- Instances of public authorities adopting advice received from the EHRC when developing and implementing policies
- Instances of international organisations and networks engaging with or seeking advice and input from the Commission



## People

We will work with community groups and individuals to understand the lived experience of human rights on St Helena and use our mandate to deliver focused work on Poverty, protected groups, development of the new prison and access to justice and the rights of at risk protected groups

The EHRC has identified four areas of human rights concern it believes require priority over 2025-28. These priorities will inform our annual operational plans, and how we make decisions about our work. However, we will also retain capacity to respond to emerging challenges to human rights on island. They are:

### 1. **The impact of poverty on human rights on St Helena**

The EHRC have significant concerns over rates of poverty on St Helena, with some of our most vulnerable people at risk most notably those on benefits or basic island pension. Our work in this area over 2025-28 will include a focus on the impacts of poverty, for example, on:

- Housing and housing standards
- Right to life and the highest attainable standard of health, including mental health
- Dignity

### 2. **Rights of protected groups**

The EHRC is concerned about how human rights are being experienced by minority and protected groups for example:

- LGBTQ+
- Women & girls who experience harassment and misogynistic behaviour.
- Those living with mental illness
- People with physical, cognitive or sensory impairment.
- Migrants
- Those living in social care

### 3. **Human rights in places of detention**

The EHRC is concerned about conditions of detention, including prison, custody, and mental health settings. Our work in this area will include a focus on:

- Right to freedom from torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including restraint.
- Remand arrangements, and of individual and systems level reviews of complaints and human rights issues.
- Issues with the Current Prison
- The new prison.

### 4. **Access to justice**

The EHRC is concerned that it is too difficult for people to access justice when they experience human rights denials or violations. This encompasses access to legal aid,

availability of legal advice, and other issues limiting the effective accountability of public authorities to human rights standards.

We will measure progress by:

- Participates in working groups or regular engagement with government, legislature and other public bodies.
- Provides government and other public authorities with advice or publishing research (upon request or unsolicited)
- Engages with civil society organisations seeking advice from the EHRC or in engagement with campaigns and support
- Provides written or oral evidence to Select Committees or officials (or similar)
- The number of applications by the EHRC to courts and tribunals for leave to appear or provide written submissions
- Instances of the EHRC's submissions reflected in the judgment of the matter.
- Instances of support provided to individual clients
- Instances of investigations by the Commission resulting in actions by SHG and/or UK government, or public authorities to improve respect and protection of human rights



## Partnerships

We will work with government and Key stakeholders to increase their understanding of human rights on St Helena and use our mandate to develop capacity and a stronger voice in our partnership with UKG.

Building on the internationally recognised Belgrade Principles for National Human Rights Institutions, we will strengthen our working relationship with the government, elected members, staff and its systems.

The EHRC recognises the role of a thriving civil society as part of the human rights system on island in assisting in the making of robust, informed, sustainable decisions. We will engage strategically with civil society, seeking to add value through our mandate, and support their independence as human rights defenders

We will develop strategic partnerships with public and third sector bodies and regulators to embed a human rights-based approach through capacity building and training resources, while safeguarding our independence

We will measure progress by

- Instances of the Commission represented in print/broadcast media and third-party reports.
- Instances of social media engagement.



- Number of engagements with NGOs and events (white ribbon, International Women's Day etc.).
- Levels of website traffic.
- Levels of engagement with the Commission's activities



## Performance

To be a learning organisation, improving our skills to achieve the greatest impact and ensure the effective and efficient delivery of our corporate obligations as a public authority

## Strengthening our organisation

The EHRC is committed to being a trusted, authoritative, accessible and credible public body which demonstrates impact for rights holders and value for money for the taxpayer.

We will develop stronger awareness of human rights on St Helena through a programme of regular communications and community engagement. We will develop our social media strategy, and enhance our media profile as commentators, thought leaders and champions on key human rights issues.

We will continue the EHRC's work as a learning organisation, which is equipped with the rights skills and staffing to deliver its mandate, and which continually develops as a good place to work.

The EHRC is committed to reflecting and engaging with all experiences and backgrounds represented in St Helenian society.

We will embed a support and supervision process across the Commission. Individual staff objectives will be aligned with the objectives of the EHRC's strategic plan, through our appraisal system.

We will maintain a rolling programme of internal policy review and will work through our Governance Framework to guide members of the Commission and staff through the successful operation of EHRC business.

The EHRC will prioritise work to improve its evidence base, informing how human rights are being experienced on island, through a combination of its own contribution and advocacy for improved government data collection.

We will continue to raise issues with the UN treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

We will produce an annual report, which will outline the developments in respect of progressing human rights and relevant domestic and international judgements.

We will share reports from the EHRC's monitoring work with the government.

We will measure progress by

- Ensuring our corporate and/or financial governance is reflected in a satisfactory audit result each year.
- The Commission's Annual Report and Account being agreed and signed off by the Public Accounts Committee
- All personal data held by the EHRC is retained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation as it applies in the United Kingdom, until such time as local law is enacted.

## Accreditation

We aim to become part of the global network of bodies accredited by the United Nations to monitor state compliance with international and national human rights law and treaties.

To be more effective in our work to promote and protect human rights, the EHRC must be seen to be credible and independent. The Paris Principles set out internationally agreed minimum standards that NHRIs must meet to be considered credible.

The Paris Principles require NHRIs to be independent in law, membership, operations, policy and control of resources. They also require that NHRIs have a broad mandate; pluralism in membership; broad functions; adequate powers; adequate resources; cooperative methods; and to engage with international bodies.

The EHRC is currently working with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), through the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA), to become accredited, like our colleagues in the UK institutions.

This is a rigorous, peer-based process, undertaken by representatives of NHRIs from each of the four regions: Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe. It is responsible for reviewing and accrediting NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles.

## Monitoring our impact

### KPI framework

The performance of the EHRC against our strategic objectives will be measured by the key performance indicators, (listed above) approved and monitored by our commissioners.

Monthly reporting to the Commission against these key strategic performance indicators will provide a robust governance overview. Annual operational plans will be developed by the Commission team and sit beneath this Strategy.

## **Annual Reports to Government**

As required by Schedule 1 paragraph 9 of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights Ordinance 2015, the EHRC will publish and lay an Annual Report before the Legislative Council to inform its scrutiny of the performance of the EHRC.

The Commission will also participate in public evidence sessions with the Public Accounts Committee and Select Committees as required.

## **Annual plans**

The EHRC will develop annual operational plans to deliver its strategic objectives for the next three years. While we will retain capacity to respond to emerging human rights challenges, draft outlines of the key anticipated content are included on the following pages.

### **Year One**

#### **In 2025/26 we will:**

- Publish an annual operational plan
- Publish a report on economic, social and cultural rights in St Helena
- Publish a report on Poverty on St Helena
- Publish a report on human rights in places of detention on island
- Relaunch *Free to be Me*
- Conduct treaty monitoring
- Publish an annual State of the Nation report for Human Rights Day
- Continue to engage in the accreditation process
- Recruit a Deputy CEO
- Strengthen our input and relationship with the Select Committees
- Publish an Annual Report and Accounts

### **Year Two**

#### **In 2026/27 we will plan to:**

- Publish an annual operational plan
- A Free to be Me campaign
- Conduct treaty monitoring
- Publish an Annual Report and Accounts
- Publish an annual State of the Nation report for Human Rights Day
- Support capacity building with public bodies

### **Year Three**

#### **In 2027/28 we will plan to:**

- Publish an annual operational plan
- A Free to be Me Campaign
- The Prison – 10 years on, report





Equality & Human Rights Commission  
Coles House  
Napoleon Street  
Jamestown  
St Helena Island  
South Atlantic Ocean  
STHL 1ZZ



+290 22133



[info@humanrightssthelena.org](mailto:info@humanrightssthelena.org)