

Equality & Human Rights Commission

Annual Report 2024–25



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Report of the Equality and Human Rights Commission for the financial year 2024/25.

While the report below gives greater detail the key points covered are:

- The EHRC calls on our government to extend the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to St Helena, granting them the same rights that they would have in the UK.
- As the work progresses on Self-determination, the EHRC will continue to engage with on-island stakeholders and Interested and Affected Parties. Assistance from C24 should be requested by the government to support this work.
- The Framework Document setting out the independent working relationship between the EHRC the Elected Members and the Public Service has been under review by SHG since **January 2023**
- We had 60 new contacts from people believing they had human rights complaints covering 122 themes. This is an increase on the previous year. We closed the year with 17 open files requiring further input, legal advice/action, research or advocacy the same as last financial year. With only two exceptions these cases relate to ongoing legal cases against government.
- Areas of risk to SHG
 - Access to justice is a growing concern for the EHRC and this will form a separate area of advice to Ministers. The EHRC is considering legal action to assert the right of the people of St Helena to reasonable legal assistance and after the event insurance in order that redress is available to all, not just the rich.
 - At the end of March 2024 three serious cases were with the EHRC needing overseas expert legal advice for which the EHRC has no budget, this was preventing these clients from exercising their rights and seeking redress for the damage caused. One case has now been passed to expert solicitors, and they are being reviewed.
 - There has been an increase in questions about the right to health. The majority of these fit into two categories:
 - Medical negligence
 - Patients on the waiting list for overseas medical referral. The number of these started to decline towards the end of the year as the BIOT funds started to reduce the waiting lists.
 - Government Landlord Housing continues to be an issue, with little to no maintenance on some properties affecting residents; existing laws fail to protect housing rights in the private sector and the human right to shelter. These issues have been ongoing for several years and resulted in the EHRC publishing its Housing Report on 10/12/2021. The EHRC gave evidence to Select Committee 2 on the human rights issues with housing on island.
 - The current economic climate, rising inflation, shipping difficulties had a detrimental effect on the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. Lack of access to basic food items and fuel poverty are having an increasingly damaging effect on more members of our society.

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FORWARD

In accordance with the *Commission for Equality & Human Rights Ordinance 2015*, I am pleased to present the Equality & Human Rights Commission's Annual Report for the year ending 31st March 2025, to be laid on the Table at the next session available of the Legislative Council

Yours sincerely



Catherine Turner LLM, BSc.
CEO & Equality & Human Rights Commissioner

This marks the final year of the EHRC's third Strategic Plan. At its outset, we restructured in response to changes in governance and the SHG framework, positioning ourselves to better seize emerging opportunities. That structure is now well-established and enabling more proactive, responsive work.

We have aligned the portfolios with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using insights from local human rights issues to track progress. Cross-cutting priorities such as self-determination, gender equality, and disability rights remain central to our efforts.

The SDGs continue to guide our approach, particularly the 2030 Agenda's emphasis on inclusive decision-making for vulnerable groups, including women (SDG 5.5), youth, and persons with disabilities.

We are advancing our application for UN accreditation, with ongoing engagement with GANHRI officials in Geneva. Internally, we have strengthened our policies in line with international best practices, including the introduction of a personal data retention and disposal policy, completed in Q1 of this financial year.

Our website remains a key tool for community engagement, offering accessible resources and timely updates on local human rights issues. We continue to inform and empower the public through regular publications.

Individual support remains a core function. This year, we handled 60 enquiries involving 122 distinct issues. Poverty-related concerns accounted for nearly half of all complaints, with growing numbers of individuals struggling to meet basic needs. We are also supporting more single mothers seeking fair child support arrangements.

Encouragingly, requests for assistance with health services and overseas referrals declined toward year-end.

Insights from our dispute resolution work inform our advocacy for structural and policy reform to address systemic inequality.

In the coming year, our focus will shift to delivering the priorities outlined in our new Strategic Plan available here <https://sthelenaehrc.org/publications/>



Kelly McDermott

Chair of the Equality & Human Rights Commission.

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PRIVACY

The Commission follows the confidentiality provisions of the Commission for Equality & Human Rights Ordinance 2015. Our Confidentiality Policy is available online at sthenaehrc.org or by contacting us.

The EHRC respectfully acknowledges the Saint Helenian people past and present, their diversity and their history.

OUR PROMISE

We will empower everyone on island to resolve their disputes, to shape law and policy, advocate for change and work closely with a range of partners to create a fairer society, preventing similar problems for others.

Over the next three years we will continue to collaborate with our partners and engage more people across the island to encourage people to discuss, value and stand up for their human rights.

We will continue to work towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). We will continue to develop as an organisation to ensure that we have the strongest possible evidence base to lead change where it is needed and increase the impact and value of our work. We will advocate for systems and laws that are developed around principles of fairness and equity and ensure that everyone is treated humanely and with dignity.

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ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The EHRC is an independent statutory body with responsibilities under the Commission for Equality & Human Rights Ordinance 2015. It currently reports to Elected Members through the Minister of Education and Employment and liaises with the Public Service through the Chief Secretary.

In terms of SHG's 10-year plan, the EHRC plays a pivotal role in assisting in achieving the Altogether Safer, Healthier, Wealthier and Greener objectives.

Our current Commission is:

Kelly McDermott	Chair
Luke Bennett	Deputy Chair
Sarah Iguna	Commissioner
Andrew Pearce	Commissioner
Gareth Rhys	Commissioner
Catherine Turner	CEO & Commissioner (ex-officio)

THE FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

The Framework Document sets out the independent working relationship between the EHRC the Elected Members and the Public Service. It outlines the relevant roles and responsibilities of each party, the deliverables and timescales. The framework document is currently under review and has been sitting with SHG since January 2023. The full text of the original document is available by clicking on the link below:

<https://sthelenaehrc.org/publications/>

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

For the period April 2022 to March 2025 the EHRC focused on the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2022-25. Through consultation and the evidence gathered during the previous strategic cycle (2019-2022) we identified areas for development of human rights on St Helena and for the Commission's development to meet those challenges. These priorities also considered our mandate, expertise and the current needs in our community along with SHG's 10 Year Plan.

The EHRC took the opportunity of the change of Governance and SHG structure to review how we worked, our role and purpose and to restructure to meet the opportunities our new working environment presents. Our Strategic Plan reflected this by linking the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to the most relevant SHG portfolio and defining actions which met the island's needs and will assist in achieving the SDGs.

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 strategic priorities for 2022 to 2025

- Sustainable Social & Economic Development
- Improving Workplace Equality for All
- Environmental & Cultural Preservation
- Safe Secure & Fair Institutions
- Improving Health & Wellbeing

OUR PRINCIPLES

We will ensure that:

- **Participation** - People should be involved in decisions that affect their rights.
- **Accountability** - There should be monitoring of how people's rights are being affected, as well as remedies when things go wrong.
- **Non-Discrimination and Equality** - All forms of discrimination must be prohibited, prevented, and

eliminated.

- **Empowerment** - Everyone should understand their rights and be fully supported to take part in developing policy and practices which affect their lives.
- **Legality** - Approaches should be grounded in the legal rights that are set out in our Constitution as well as the local and international laws.

ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission's role is to protect and promote human rights in St Helena, and we do this through a range of functions under our laws. These functions cover our important day-to-day work, as well as key projects and initiatives, and enable us to:

INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS

We have powers to investigate complaints of human rights infringements including discrimination, sexual harassment, and racial and religious intolerance by providing a free and confidential assistance service.

In 2024–25 we undertook a wide range of work under these functions, as well as projects that aim to increase the impact of our work and build a stronger, more effective organisation. We have restructured our organisation to provide the flexibility, responsiveness and relevance to St Helena required to move human rights forward on the island. Our structure makes a commissioner responsible for each Portfolio, working with the Minister and Director to highlight issues as they arise and find human rights compliant solutions to problems as quickly as possible.

The responsibilities during 2024/25 were as follows:

- Andrew Pearce - Infrastructure
- Sarah Iguna – Health & Social Care
- Kelly McDermott – Education & Employment
- Luke Bennett – Safety Security & Home Affairs
- Catherine Turner – Environment in addition to CEO role.

INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS

We have powers to investigate complaints of human rights infringements including discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, and religious intolerance by providing a free and confidential assistance service.

The EHRC empowers complainants (we call them contacts) to resolve their complaints by listening to everyone who contacts us, hearing their complaints and assisting with those that fall within our remit. Where a complaint is not of a human rights nature we advise on the correct person or agency to contact. If necessary, we will initiate communication on behalf of the contact to ensure the matter is dealt with.

We use the information from all the Contacts to inform our work and address systemic issues; every contact is recorded on our data base. A client file is opened for each complainant with a human rights complaint.

A client may raise several different complaint themes for example, a complaint about sexual harassment in the workplace, may also include discrimination based on race, or a homeless person may also have difficulty accessing benefits.

Table 1 (below) Shows that this year we had 60 new contacts from people believing they had a human rights complaints covering 122 themes. At the start of the financial year, we ran an information campaign explaining where people should go to get help which initially reduced the number of people coming to us first and is reflected in the decrease in contacts. However, those people that did come to the EHRC raised as many themes as previous years, indicating that more complex cases are being brought forward. We closed the year with 17 open files requiring further input, legal advice/action,

RESEARCH

We undertake research here on island, to understand and find solutions to systemic causes of discrimination and human rights breaches. We also follow international human rights news, trends and thinking to bring and keep the rights of St Helenians on a par with the UK and current best practice.

ADVOCATE AND EMPOWER

We raise awareness across all parts of the community about the importance of equality and human rights, encouraging meaningful debate and challenging discriminatory views and behaviours.

ENFORCE

We intervene in court proceedings to bring an expert independent perspective to cases raising equal opportunity and human rights issues. We conduct inquiries and investigations to identify and eliminate systemic discrimination.

EDUCATE

We provide information to help people understand and assert their rights. We are happy to conduct reviews of programs and practices to help organisations comply with their equal opportunity and human rights obligations.

MONITOR

We monitor the operation of the Constitution, and the Human Rights instruments extended to the island and track St Helena's progress in protecting fundamental rights. We produce reports for the UK and United Nations about what is or is not being done to protect our rights.

This document sets out under the above headings the work the EHRC carried out during the period under review, how it achieved against its targets and how the EHRC has helped SHG progress its 10-year plan. In addition, our achievements against actions in our strategic plan and budget request are included in the matrix at Annex 1 below.

- 2. Long waits for medical referrals, but these decreased towards the end of the year when the BIOT funding was agreed
- 3. Out of date and out of stock medication including vital drugs like insulin.

MENTAL HEALTH

11 COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS

Issues around mental health rose substantially during this period. The reasons for the contacts vary:

- a) People with serious long-term conditions sometimes need care for periods greater than 72 hours which is understandably not available on island. However occasionally such people become a danger to themselves and others and create unease in the community. The EHRC recommends the development of a robust policy with attached funding detailing how such individuals will be dealt with medically and suitable legislation to protect these very vulnerable people.
- b) The tragic event in late 2024 served to highlight the issues of mental health among young people on island. NHS England reported one in five children and young people in England aged eight to 25 had a probable mental disorder in 2023. The increase in children self-harming and struggling with anxiety and stress in young people on island suggests a similar situation here. The EHRC would like to see published statistics on the mental health issues on island, disaggregated

The EHRC is deeply concerned at the lack of investment mental health support and also in our children’s future. While the report into the state of education on the island has been published and action taken, the facilities for our children and young people are woeful. Where else in the world does a capital city not have a play space for its children?

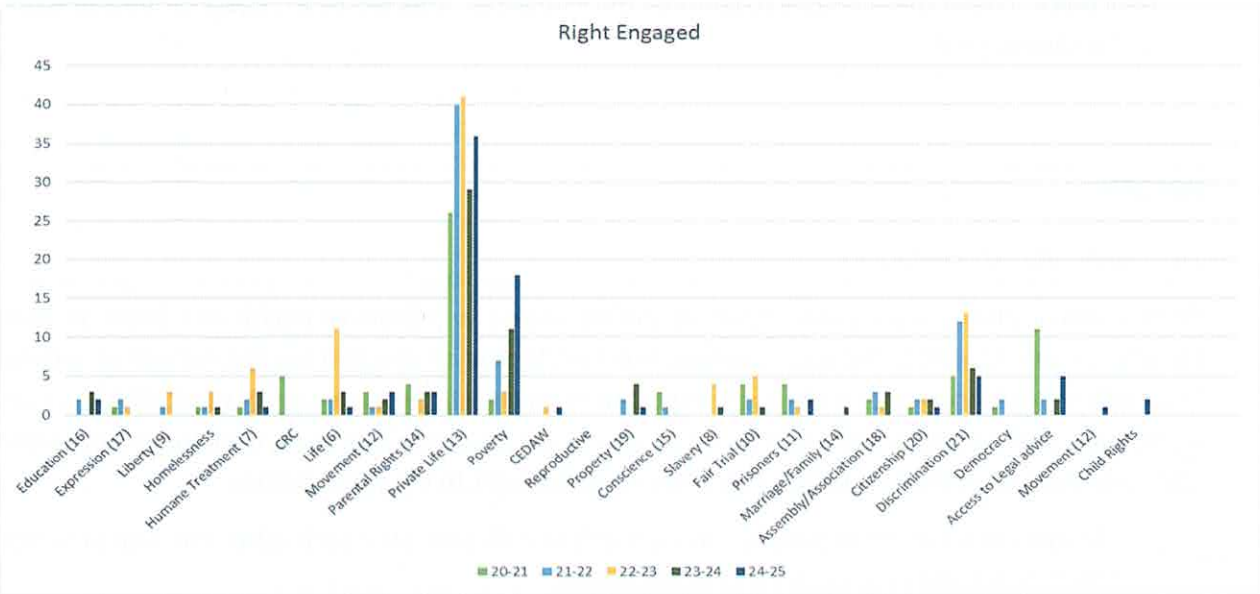


Fig 3. Subjects/issues raised by Fundamental Rights and Freedoms protection in the Constitution

disabilities and/or life changing conditions, often 24/7 without any respite are slipping deeper into poverty and debt.

While benefits like the BIP and IRB have been increased, they are not keeping pace with inflation for the items they are most likely to buy for example food (+7%), and energy (+14.5%) while the general rate is up 6.3%

The increased cost of transport is causing problems for those who live in outlying districts (especially those on benefits) accessing medical care and other facilities only available in Jamestown. The public transport cost of a return trip to town from Levelwood is now £7.20 one of our clients explained to us that once their rent and utilities were deducted from their IRB, they had £50 for the week, the bus fare to town represents 14.4% of her disposable income. It is therefore expensive to travel to the hospital for appointments especially if tests are required as these can rarely all be arranged for the same visit.

The EHRC is often told by our clients that they are going without medication or taking it every other day as they cannot afford the medication or to travel to the pharmacy. The EHRC therefore gives the Medical Fees Exemption Policy and application form to all clients who are experiencing financial difficulties and may qualify.

The people in full time employment but struggling fall into two categories

1. Families where both adults are on minimum wage and therefore struggling to feed children, provide school uniforms and packed lunches. One mother described spending almost £20 per week on bread to be able to provide packed lunches for the family for school and work. Another said she counted out the slices of bread for her daughter's school lunch for the week from the two loaves she could afford and what was left she would let her have if she was hungry when she came home.
2. Families where the parents have separated and the absent parent is failing to support the children. There appears to be a culture of not taking responsibly for ones actions and a reluctance to take these people to court by the ex-partner. This will be a subject for further work in the coming year.

HEALTH

19 COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS

As mentioned above, during the reporting period access to adequate health has been an area attracting many contacts. The issues around the ex-orthopaedic surgeon are the subject of around 160 medical negligence cases which were expected to reach court in the second half of 2024 however no case has been settled to date and the EHRC clients are looking at trial dates of October-November 2026 two years later than expected. The other issues brought to the EHRC include:

1. An apparent culture of bullying among medical staff both with each other and with patients. These were sign posted to the relevant bodies.

There has been a shift in the areas of concern this year. As Fig 2 shows the most complaints were on poverty/debt – 20 contacts, Benefits (including Basic Island Pension (BIP), Carers Allowances and Better Life Allowances (BLA)) 18 complaints; those on low incomes cannot cope with ever increasing food, utility and fuel prices.

Next came health, 15 contacts. The medical negligence cases have led to more people seeking advice from us on issues of compensation, confidentiality and representation, complaints on access to overseas medical referrals decreased towards the end of the year as the BIOT money allowed for more people to be treated.

There has been a significant increase in the number of contacts about mental health which rose from 3 in 2023/24 to 12 in 2024/25. The key issues were access to counselling and care facilities for those with serious autism and violent behavioural issues.

Public sector employment complaints remain high with 12 contacts this year. These are mainly due to the inability of staff in the care sector to take leave and toil due to staff shortages and disputes over sick pay.

NOTE the police and prison have been historically linked together as they both fell under the responsibility of the Director of Police (Chief of Police). The EHRC has now disaggregated the data and will report on both separately in the new strategic period.

POVERTY & BENEFITS

20 Complaints/Concerns on poverty + 18 on Benefits

These two topics are closely related although it is of note that not all benefits issues concerned poverty and 5 of our contacts on poverty were from people in full time employment. These were mainly single parents struggling with feeding children when on minimum wage.

The number of families claiming Income Related Benefits (IRB) at the end of March 2023 was 245 this rose to 270 by 31st March 2024 and 277 by the end of March 2025, the trend is upwards.² In March 2023 833 people were in receipt of Basic Island Pension (BIP) up slightly on previous years and this had risen to 853 by 31st March 2024. By March 2025 this figure had reached 872 and the trend is set to continue upwards. The St Helenian population (excluding visitors) had fallen from 3882 to 3840 in the same period. Thirty percent of our population is in receipt of some form of state benefit.

Some payments (carers allowances and Better Life Allowance (BLA)) have not been increased for many years.

Social Services have declined to supply data on how many people are in receipt of Better Life and Carers allowances, therefore accurate data on how many people are struggling on those allowances is not available to the EHRC. However, what is indisputable is that the carers allowances have not been increased since they were introduced. Those in receipt of this payment, for caring for people with

² <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/st-helena/statistics/st-helena-in-figures/social/#unemployment>

housing”¹ which confirms a lack of progress in meeting the needs and rights of the people of St Helena.

- 4) The current economic climate, rising inflation and increases in water costs have had an increasingly detrimental effect on the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. The EHRC arranges help (vouchers, food parcels, clothing etc) as best it can through other charitable organisations like the Churches. The closure of Making Ends Meet has had a devastating effect on many of our most vulnerable clients.

COMPLAINT SUBJECT

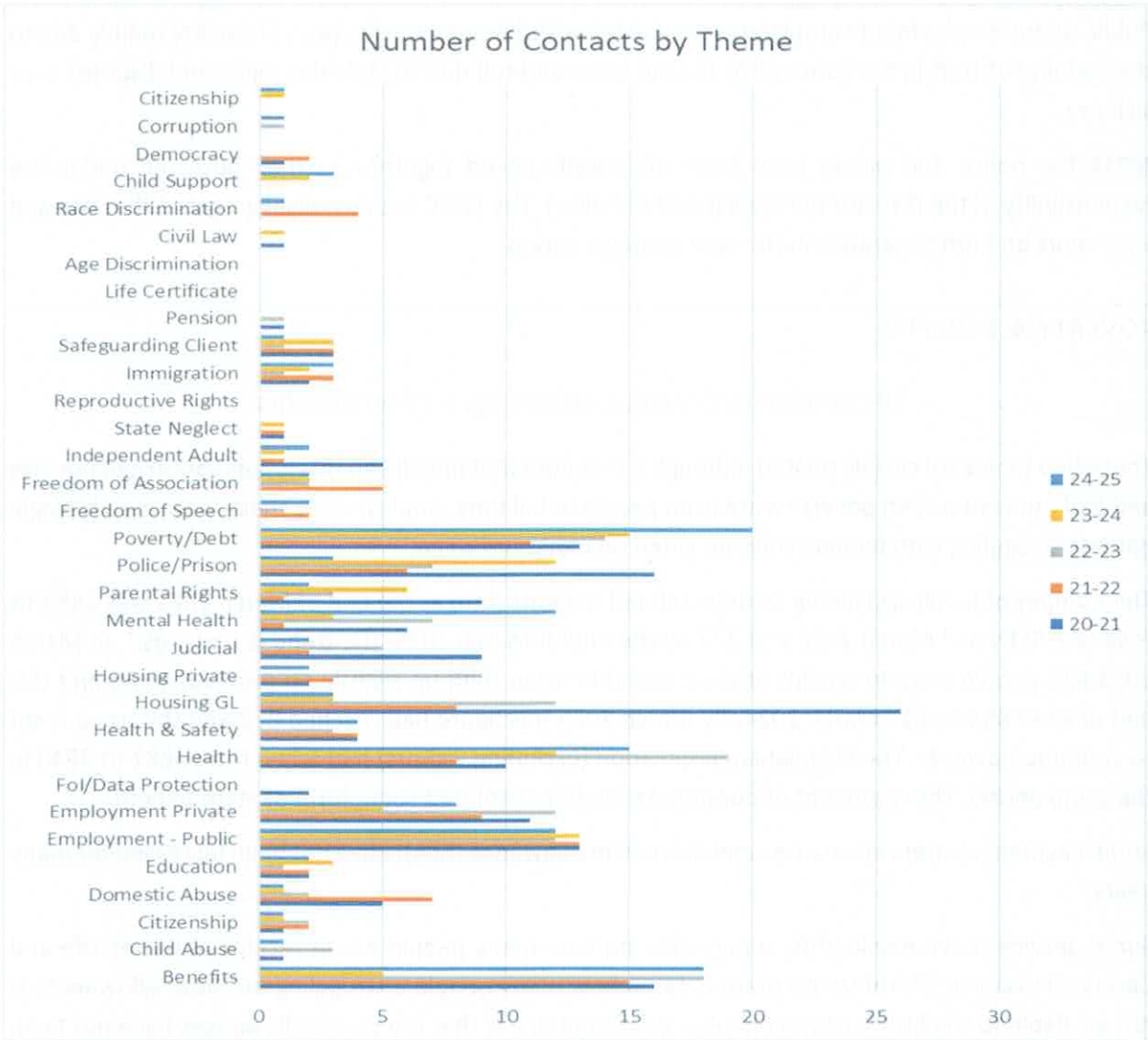


Fig 2 Subjects/issues raised by contacts

¹ <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Sessional-Paper-5-Report-to-LegCo-Select-Committee-2-Social-Housing.pdf>

As in previous years some contacts required little more than an email or phone call to resolve the issue. Sometimes just explaining to the complainant that the policy/explanation they had been given was correct was enough. This year many contacts have required several weeks or months of work and advocacy.

There was an increase in contacts from people in need of financial help as prices have increased but incomes have not. It is becoming increasingly hard to find help for people as Making Ends Meet has closed and there is only so much the Churches can do.

10 of the contacts were referred to the Public Solicitor's Office as their cases required legal advice, most of which involved employment and healthcare issues.

Those with human rights issues continue to receive our help. The Commission is independent from the public solicitor/Hugh James but continues to assist legally represented clients with research work and support. Currently we have 26 clients that fall within this category including some that have been ongoing for several years.

15 of the contacts were assisted by the EHRC without the need for further help. The Commission finalised 43 client files in the period under review, including files that were opened in previous financial years.

AREAS OF RISK TO SHG

- 1) As of the end of March 2025, the EHRC was handling three serious cases requiring expert legal advice from overseas. The lack of access to such advice had prevented the individuals involved from exercising their rights and seeking redress for the harm they experienced. One case has since been referred to specialist solicitors, while the remaining two are currently under review by legal experts abroad.
- 2) There has been an increase in questions about the right to health throughout the year. The majority of these fit into two categories:
 - a. Medical negligence – These cases are awaiting progress due to legal argument. The EHRC is seeking the Court's permission to intervene.
 - b. Patients on the waiting list for overseas medical referral. This started to reduce at the end of the year as the BIOT funding was used.
- 3) *"Government Landlord Housing continues to be an issue, with little to no maintenance on some properties affecting residents; existing laws fail to protect housing rights in the private sector and the human right to shelter. These issues have been ongoing for many years and resulted in the EHRC publishing its Housing Report on 10/12/2021. A response to this report was received in August 2023 and the EHRC understands that a new housing strategy is being developed by SHG".* This was what we wrote a year ago, nothing has changed publicly. The EHRC welcomes and supports the findings of Select Committee 2's investigation into

research or advocacy this is the same number as the previous year and reflects the number of longer running cases we are working on with ex-prisoners and ex-patients of Sergio Bran and Carlos Soto.

Table 1. Contacts 2024/25

	2023/24	2024/25
New Contacts	103	60
Themes Raised	138	122
Files Closed during the year (includes files opened in previous years).	96	43
Files remaining open as of 31 st March	17	17

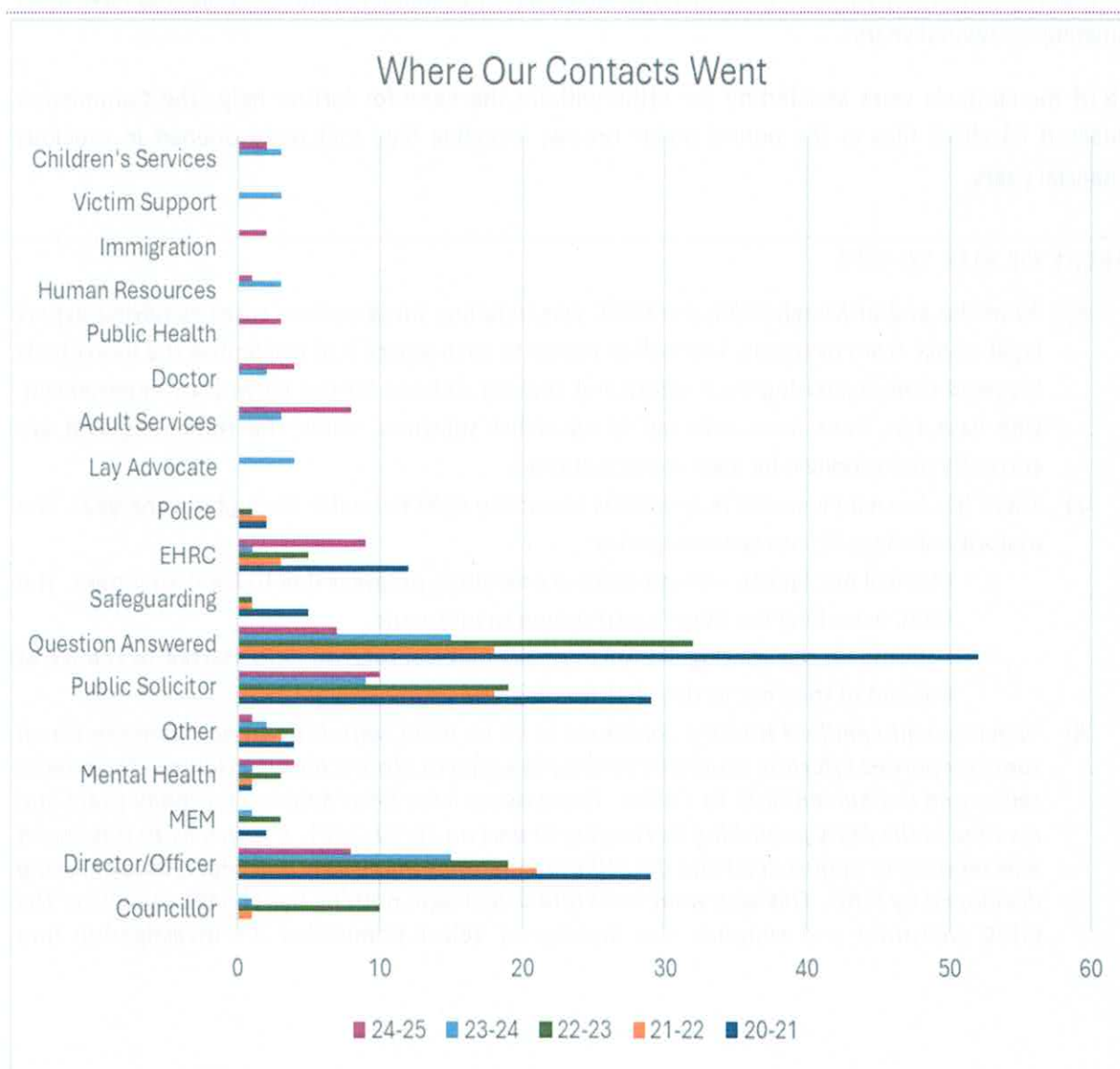


Fig 1 Shows the number of clients referred to other agencies.

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The top three areas of concern related to protected characteristics and vulnerability are listed in table 2 below:

Protected Characteristic	Total complaints
Disability	7
Age	7
Race	2

DISABILITY ISSUES

Complaints centred around disability issues remain a major concern. Access to homes, work, public buildings and transport are high on the list of issues faced by those with disabilities. For example, anyone who cannot manage stairs cannot access the Council Chamber which is our seat of Government. This historic concern was again raised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association St Helena Legislative Council Benchmark Assessment Report August 2021, in Recommendation 5:

There should be improved facilities to give the LegCo increased stature and make it a distinct and separate institution from the government. There should be a review of access to the chamber and any other meeting space to see if reasonable adjustments could be made to make them accessible to all.

The hospital (especially outpatients) is unsuitable/inaccessible. This is a very old building, not built with the needs of the elderly, disabled or those managing babies and small children in mind. The introduction of a ramp between the waiting area and triage has made it easier for wheelchair users but as there are no rails it is harder for those who use a stick or have walking difficulties. The absence of a handrail on the wall of the main staircase again makes using the stairs difficult if you have a broken or disabled arm.

THE EHRC CALLS ON OUR GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO ST HELENA, GRANTING THEM THE SAME RIGHTS THAT THEY WOULD HAVE IN THE UK.

The lack of funding for health is well known and understood with an aging population the demands on budgets are high. However, the EHRC has received 3 complaints from wheelchair users that they need suitable wheelchairs but there is no budget or funding available.

This is an area of risk to Government who are failing our disabled and elderly who may well have a case for discrimination under Clause 21 of our Constitution.

AGE

The age-related issues were

- Very elderly people being charged for medical expenses who should have been offered medical exemption certificates.
- Concerns raised by clients in care facilities about the lack of autonomy and private life.
- Difficulties accessing public transport
- Some cross-over with disabilities as the difficulties of age make access to public buildings and events difficult.

RACE

Because these issues are unique to the individuals concerned details cannot be given here as the individuals may be identifiable.

RESEARCH & ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT

We undertake research here on island, to understand and find solutions to systemic causes of discrimination and human rights breaches. We also follow international human rights news, trends and thinking to bring and keep the rights of St Helenians on a par with the UK and current best practice. We provide information to SHG, Ministers, Elected Members and the Office of the Governor. Of note during this year are:

1. Constitutional reform has moved Saint Helena to a Ministerial Government designed to increase accountability, transparency and speed up decision-making. The changes to the constitution that took place were not conducted in an open and transparent manner that facilitated public participation. Research into democratic constitutional reform has been completed. Work will continue to ensure that a robust and fit for purpose Constitution is realised.
2. Gender Equality - this is an ongoing project, statistics are gathered on issues which may exhibit gender bias, trends are reviewed and researched as they develop. We hope to have the opportunity to work with the new Ministers to develop equity for all islanders and ensure that elements of society, often the most vulnerable are not adversely affected by decisions made, or changes in circumstances.
3. A submission to Select Committee 1 on Human Rights in Health and Social Care
4. A Submission to Select Committee 2 on Housing as a human right
5. Advice was given to Ministers on the complex human rights issues in Houses of Multiple Occupancy and the need for robust policy/legislation to protect those who live in such accommodation **before** these come online in St Helena.

6. Advice was given to Ministers on the need to support mothers under the age of 18 in full time education.

EDUCATION

We provide information to help people understand and assert their rights. This may be in the form of leaflets, books, films or training. We also offer an education and consultancy service to government, business and the community to drive leading practice in equality, diversity and human rights.

WORKING WITH DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Under the strategic priority of developing a human rights culture, the Commission has undertaken several projects to raise awareness about people's rights under our laws.

EXAMPLES

- Police and Crime Panel
- The prison
- White Ribbon Day.
- Victim's Support Service
- Safeguarding Board
- Serving on the Board of SAMS

This year the EHRC, in proud partnership with the St Helena Association UK, received twelve beautiful baby boxes, each one a symbol of care, generosity, and hope. To be gifted to new mothers and their precious babies, giving each baby born on island an equal start in life.

We were honoured to welcome Mrs Vilma Clingham-Toms and Mr James Miller, both dedicated members of the St Helena Association UK, who visited the island and personally presented several of the baby boxes.



The Baby Box Scheme is designed to give every child the best possible start in life. Parents have responded with heartfelt gratitude, praising the quality, thoughtfulness, and usefulness of the items included. These boxes have not only provided essential newborn supplies but have also offered emotional and financial relief, especially for families navigating rising costs.

Here are just a few reflections from the recipients:

“Receiving the baby box was a truly touching moment—one that made me feel honoured, supported, and deeply appreciative. Skye has already fallen in love with her duck

comforter. We are both incredibly grateful.”

—Paige & Skye Williams

“The contents were well thought through, with each item being essential for a newborn. We hope this initiative continues so other families can benefit from this kind gesture.”

—Rebecca & Gus, parents of baby Hartley

“Everything in the box was very useful and such a welcoming gift. We truly appreciate receiving it. Starr absolutely loves her comforter”

—Taylor & Jorden, parents of baby Starr

Each baby box also includes helpful resources on breastfeeding and the Rights of the Child, reinforcing our shared commitment to dignity, care, and informed parenting.

The EHRC expresses its heartfelt thanks to the St Helena Association UK for the boxes.



In addition to the baby boxes, we ran two campaigns to assist the elderly on low incomes and for children in low-income families.

To celebrate the International Day of Older Persons on October 1st and International Food Day on the 16th October 2024 the EHRC invited the public and local businesses to come together to support the elderly community. We requested donations of cereal and milk to ensure our seniors had access to a nutritious breakfast for the month of October.

As a result we were able to deliver a healthy breakfast to 73 senior citizens along with information about their human rights and the Medical Fees Exemption Policy.

For the third year the team worked in their own time to organise the Secret Santa which this year provided a Christmas gift for 96 children and babies in some of the least well-off families on island.

The EHRC thanks the generous people both here and overseas who donated the wonderful gifts for the children and to the commission staff who selflessly gave their time and resources to make this possible.



ADVOCATE & EMPOWER.

We raise awareness across our communities about the importance of equality and human rights, encouraging meaningful debate, leading public discussion and challenging discriminatory views and behaviours.

The EHRC listens to its clients, we hear their stories and provide information about who can help them, what their rights are and how to access those rights.

Where people lack capacity to act for themselves a commissioner will advocate on their behalf but where possible we try to support and empower people to speak for themselves.

ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA

During 2024–25 the Commission engaged with the media to join public discussions about key human rights issues and to ensure that our campaigns, reports and interventions reached the public.

This year we spoke about disability, gender issues and domestic abuse.

A commissioner sits on the SAMS Board.

The Police and Crime Panel is uploaded to YouTube.

Baby Box (see above) articles have also been published.

There were weekly news paper articles throughout June 2024 for pride month.

Articles for International Human Rights Day, Social Justice Day, Women's Day and Elimination of Racism Day and International Day of the Older Person.

EXAMPLES

SOCIAL MEDIA

An important part of the Commission's engagement comes from social media. Our social media channels, including Facebook, are used as an integral part of our communications and allow us to broadcast our messages, amplify the voices of others, and engage with the community online.

We also publish articles in the Sentinel.

Our Facebook page - 743 people like our page 752 people follow it, an increase of over a 100 from the previous year.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/HumanRightsStHelena>

SUBMISSIONS TO THIRD PARTIES

The EHRC submitted comment to the Utilities Regulator on proposed tariff changes by Connect St Helena Ltd., raising concerns about the water charges which require some families to pay premium rates for less than UN say is needed to meet basic cooking and hygiene needs.

The EHRC responded to the Chief Justice's consultation on the proposed changes to Court Rules.

CONSTITUTION, LEGISLATION & POLICY

The EHRC submitted proposals for changes to the Immigration policy and has completed a document on the Constitution.

MODERN SLAVERY LEGISLATION

Following its first complaint of slavery the EHRC made strenuous efforts to persuade our Ministers of urgent need for Modern slavery legislation which is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Protection of Victims:** Modern slavery laws provide essential support and protection for victims of human trafficking, forced labour, and other forms of exploitation.
2. **Punishment for Perpetrators:** Such legislation gives law enforcement the tools to prosecute and punish those responsible for modern slavery. This should include severe penalties to deter potential offenders.
3. **Prevention and Awareness:** Modern slavery laws help raise awareness about the issue, making it harder for traffickers to operate.
4. **Global Responsibility:** With over 40 million people estimated to be in modern slavery worldwide, it is a global issue that requires coordinated international efforts, St Helena needs to play its part.
5. **Economic and Social Impact:** Modern slavery has significant economic and social costs. By addressing it, legislation helps create fairer labour markets and reduces the exploitation that will undermine the economic development of our island.

The EHRC is troubled that there is no such legislation although it notes that the Prevention of Abusive Business Practices Ordinance 2025 does include Modern Slavery as an abusive business practice.

POLICY

The EHRC has commented on various SHG policies throughout the year including the changes to the Minimum wage and immigration.

In addition, we are regularly asked to assist private sector businesses with their policies.

CONSULTATION AND COMMITTEES

Commissioners and staff are actively encouraged to work with advocacy groups on the island and are currently involved with the League of Friends, the Safe Haven, Corona Society, PTA and Saintability as well as various religious organisations etc. in their personal time. The EHRC also is involved with several working groups including the White Ribbon, Police and Crime Panel and the Safeguarding board and SAMS.

MONITOR

We monitor the operation of the Constitution, and the Human Rights instruments extended to the island and track St Helena's progress in protecting fundamental rights. We produce reports for the UK and United Nations about what is or is not being done to protect our rights.

The report to the United Nations Committee on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) was sent in April 2020. The full text of which is available from the EHRC website.

During this year we have continued work on Decolonisation and Self Determination.

In February 2022, Special Committee on the Situation regarding the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples of Saint Helena in the Working paper prepared by the Secretariat, the General Assembly actioned:

“(c) Further reaffirmed that it was ultimately for the people of Saint Helena to determine freely their future political status in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter, the Declaration and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and in that connection called upon the administering Power, in cooperation with the territorial Government and appropriate bodies of the United Nations system, to develop political education programmes for the Territory in order to foster an awareness among the people of their right to self-determination in conformity with the legitimate political status options, based on the principles clearly defined in Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) and other relevant resolutions and decisions.”

The EHRC will continue work on the issue of Self Determination during the next reporting period and is a stream of work in the Strategic Plan 2025-2028.

RECOMMENDATION

As the work progresses on Self-determination, the EHRC will continue to engage with on-island stakeholders and Interested and Affected Parties.

Assistance from C24 should be requested by the Island to support this work.

ENFORCE

We intervene in court proceedings to bring an expert independent perspective to cases raising equal opportunity and human rights issues. Currently this involves both Prison and Medical Negligence cases. We conduct investigations to identify and eliminate systemic discrimination.

INTERVENTIONS

There have not been any interventions during the period under review. However, the EHRC has been given leave to intervene in the Court of Appeal.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EHRC

The EHRC is committed to investing in our people and our workplace by embedding our values, nurturing a diverse, inclusive and respectful workforce and ensuring a safe, healthy and productive work environment that aims to bring the best out of our people and make the Commission a great place to work. The EHRC's internal policies were reviewed over the year to ensure they reflect this aim.

ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

This year we have made major strides towards accreditation as a UN recognised EHRC.

Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) accreditation is important to the St Helena Equality & Human Rights Commission for several reasons:

1. **International Recognition:** Accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) provides international recognition that the commission meets the Paris Principles, which are the global standards for national human rights institutions.
2. **Credibility and Independence:** Achieving GANHRI accreditation will demonstrate that the commission operates independently and effectively, which will enhance its credibility both on island and internationally.
3. **Enhanced Influence:** With GANHRI accreditation, the commission gains a stronger voice in international human rights forums, including the United Nations. This allows it to participate in discussions and influence decisions on human rights issues globally.
4. **Access to Resources and Support:** Accredited institutions often have better access to funding, training, and other resources that can help them carry out their work more effectively.
5. **Networking Opportunities:** Accreditation connects the commission with a global network of human rights institutions, facilitating the exchange of best practices, experiences, and strategies.
6. **Accountability and Improvement:** The accreditation process involves regular reviews, which help ensure that the commission maintains high standards and continuously improves its operations. Providing reassurance to SHG, the PAC and the public.

These benefits will collectively enhance the commission's ability to protect and promote human rights in St Helena.

OTHER MATTERS

The outcome of the Work Plan for the year 2024/25 is at annex 1.

The EHRC has a successful audit with no recommendations.

The commission closed the year on budget.

Summary of target deliverables/ outputs

The table below shows the financial projections for 2024/25 with a summary of how our outputs link to the St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025 and how resources were allocated to deliver those outputs.

Red = Behind schedule/unlikely to be completed. Yellow = On schedule not yet complete. Green = completed/ongoing Lilac = Funding requested but not forthcoming therefore no action.

The monetary figure in the penultimate column is the figure requested in the budget submission for this year.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Ministers to bring the minimum wage above the minimum income standard (MIS). Push for Basic Island Pension (BIP) and Income Related 	<p>A Public Report to Ministers on Poverty levels and Current trends/Issues by age, gender, and ability</p> <p>Capacity Building with Disabled Persons Aid, Age</p>	<p>Altogether Better for Children and Young People</p> <p>Altogether Healthier</p> <p>Altogether Wealthier</p>	800	<p>Worked with Social Policy Planner, Labour Regulating Authority. Research conducted. 16 clients assisted with benefits/carer's allowance or other social payment issues.</p> <p>Working with Saintability</p> <p>Making Ends Meet has closed.</p>

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
Benefits (BIP) to be increased to at least MIS.	Ways and Making Ends Meet		600	Met with Social Policy Planner, Minister for Health and Social Care and Finance Minister assisted Clients with specific needs the issue raised last year of those who are refused benefits because they own land, has been addressed by Ministers who have also addressed the issue of young mothers' benefit entitlement when in full time education. Also Continued to lobby for UK state pensions paid on island to be index linked as they are in the UK. This has been addressed through the BIOT agreement; however no action has materialised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby for a legal definition of homelessness and minimum housing standards. Ensure there is a clear definition of housing standards and 	Continue working with Housing to develop human rights-based policies and legislation to include	Effective Infrastructure Altogether Safer Altogether Healthier	1000	Gave evidence to Select Committee 2 on housing standards and human rights. Gave feedback on Utility Tariffs to URA

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> basic services that it is open, transparent and publicly understood Push for legislation to protect both landlords and tenants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable materials Low cost/renewable energy and energy efficient Fair division of risks and responsibilities of both lessee and lessor. 	<p>Altogether Greener</p> <p>Altogether Better for Children and Young People</p>		<p>Met with Housing and Minister Brooks.</p> <p>Assisted 3 clients with GLH related issues, including disabled access to housing and independent living.</p>
Encourage increased educational attainment levels especially among boys	Talk to boys in school – survey to find out issues.	Altogether Better for Children and Young People	2,500	Difficulties engaging with the school delayed the start of this work. Funding from this was allocated to supporting claimants in the Sergio case. The EHRC engaged with the Education Review and welcomes the proposed changes as a pragmatic and important step forward. The COBIS model does address boys in education.
Monitor and report on equal pay for equal work, for all; reducing gender pay gap.	Research as part of Gender Action Plan	Altogether Wealthier	4000	Work is continuing. The EHRC is delighted to see the recent figures on full time employment which demonstrate parity. However, there is no statistical evidence on part-time workers and the

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
				effects of zero-hours contracts which elsewhere have a disproportionate impact on women workers.
Lobby for stronger employment protection legislation	Work with Labour Regulator, Employment Rights Committee, Education and Employment, Chamber of Commerce. To produce an outline of what is required.	Altogether Wealthier	2800	Worked with Social Policy Planner, Labour Regulating Authority. Worked with 20 clients with employment related issues (12 public sector)
Help create measurable increase in the understanding of equality and diversity issues in key organisations that the Commission works with	Deliver Equality & Diversity Training to all sectors Basic introduction free – scale of charges for full cost recovery for further training	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Wealthier Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	3000	Training developed and ready for delivery. Work with Police planned for later 2025 and for SHG. The EHRC has a representative on the Safeguarding board and the Police and Crime Pannel Charging Policy developed

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
Lobby for improved quality of treated water and access to untreated water sources.	Public awareness of Human Right to Safe drinking water through media campaign	Effective Infrastructure Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Healthier Altogether Greener	500	Did not receive requested budget therefore no action taken.
Assist in the extension and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) and its standards for monitoring places of detention.	Advise SHG on the requirements of the protocol Use knowledge gained from research and other NHRIs to assist in the establishment of the independent monitoring body	Altogether Safer Altogether Healthier Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	2000	Met with the relevant minister and director. To discuss it is currently not seen as a priority. We have subsequently met with the Superintendent of Jails and other stakeholders and the EHRC is in the process of drafting a proposal and outlining the stages to achieve this.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
Raise awareness of the importance of human rights in closed environments and how vulnerable individuals, particularly the young and people with disabilities can assert their rights	Raise awareness through a campaign including a de-tailed booklet, press, radio and social media. Leaflets to be available to those detained and their families in the Prison, the hospital and through the courts and Public Solicitors Office	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Safer	2000	This was not achieved in the form originally stated. The medical negligence cases and the supporting of the claimant's access to justice was more immediate. These are vulnerable people who for various reasons cannot advocate for themselves. The EHRC are currently supporting 8 individuals. The EHRC gave evidence in the recent Court hearing which found the plaintiff's human rights had been breached. In addition, the EHRC has a representative on the Safeguarding board and the Police and Crime Panel
Prison Ordinance	Conduct a review of the Prison's Ordinance and the various other law and policies that regulate closed environments to ensure it is fully compliant with human	Altogether Safer	1500	Did not receive requested budget therefore no action taken.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
Ensure vulnerable individuals and their families have greater awareness of rights in closed environments and are better able to act.	Raise awareness through a campaign including a de-tailed booklet, press, radio and social media. Leaflets to be available to those detained and their families in the Prison, the hospital and through the courts and Public Solicitors Office	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Safer Altogether Healthier Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	3000	Did not receive requested budget therefore no action taken.
Assist institutions to understand the benefits of human rights and to be more committed to ensuring that the rights of people in their care are protected.	Offer Training/ leaflets/information	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Safer Altogether Healthier	Nil	Work continued to support the re-boot of the Youth Parliament. Diversity Training has been developed in nine modules; five modules for all levels and four for those in strategic positions. This is being rolled out in October 2025.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
		Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector		In addition, the EHRC has a representative on the Safeguarding board and the Police and Crime Pannel
Lobby for a real Freedom of Information/Data Protection Ordinance	Raise at every opportunity this much needed human rights protection.	Altogether Safer Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	Nil	The EHRC raises this at every possible opportunity and grows increasingly concerned as the Data protection work being carried out by SHG does not include any FOI protections. Since the introduction of Ministerial Government, the amount of information available to the public has drastically decreased. The EHRC hopes for change with the new ministerial team.
Work to ensure nobody is left behind.	Monitoring and reporting on numbers of people living below the MIS and below minimum wage Report on tax threshold v minimum wage and MIS.	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Wealthier Altogether Healthier	5000	Correspondence with Councillors and Ministers. Letters in the Newspaper following the budget. Support and assistance given to 41 new clients and 36 clients carried over at the start of the year.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
Lobby for improved access to health care for the poor, elderly and vulnerable.	Highlighting problems as they arise and are reported to the EHRC to the Portfolio lead and Minister.	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Healthier	500	Work on this has commenced with the Minister for Health and Social Care and will continue after the General Election.
Lobby for changes in the Constitution to reflect the right of self-determination, ISESCR Facilitate the Conversation about St Helena's relationship with the UK. Work with the change team to ensure the project and outcome is human rights compliant.	Commit to playing a full and active role in the review of the Constitution	Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	10,000	The EHRC has conducted its review of the Constitution and has kept in communication with Elected Members who have also raised concerns. Research has been amassed on Scrutiny and accountability, Self-determination and the much-needed inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights. Further work was carried out throughout 24/25
Work with Health Promotion to achieve a Whole Systems Approach to tackling Obesity	Form a part of the core working team in Stage II of the WSAO	Altogether Healthier	1,000	This work has now ceased.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2024/25 £	Outcome
		Altogether Better for Children and Young People		

