

S.P. 36/24



St Helena
Government

ST HELENA GOVERNMENT
EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Laid on the Table 5th December 2024

Equality & Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2023–24



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the Report of the Equality and human Rights Report for the financial year 2023/24.

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

- 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 103 new contacts from people believing they had a human rights complaints covering 138 themes. This was similar to the previous year. We closed the year with 17 open files requiring further input, legal advice/action, research or advocacy a decrease of 32%.
- Areas of risk to SHG
 - The EHRC is troubled that there appears to have been no action to address the modern slavery concerns, despite raising the issue as a priority on several occasions. In the view of the EHRC this represents a huge reputational and financial risk to government and the UK.
 - At the end of March 2023 four 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 the rest will be reviewed during 2024/25 if the funding for legal work is agreed, hopefully reducing the financial and reputational risk to SHG.
 - 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.
 - 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. A response to this report was received in August 2023 and the EHRC understands that a new housing strategy is being developed by SHG.
 - 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.
- 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.

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PRIVACY

The Commission follows the confidentiality provisions of the Commission for Equality & Human Rights Ordinance 2015. Our privacy policy is available online at sthelenaehrc.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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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 2024, to be laid n the Table at the next session of the Legislative Council

Yours sincerely



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

INTRODUCTION

The EHRC took the opportunity of the change of Governance and SHG structure to and restructure to meet the opportunities our new working environment presents. This structure has now bedded in and is aiding its ability to be proactive in its work.

This was year two of our strategic plan which provides the flexibility, responsiveness and relevance to St Helena required to move human rights forward on the island.

Each commissioner is responsible for a Portfolio, working, when possible, with the Minister and Director responsible to highlight issues as they arise and find human rights compliant solutions to problems as quickly as possible.

We have taken the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and using the knowledge we have gained of the human rights issues on island have matched the goals with the portfolio and will use them to measure progress.

We have not lost sight of the cross-cutting issues like the right to self-determination, gender equality and disability rights the team is working hard on those too.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been an important reference point for the EHRC and will continue to guide our work during the next strategic period. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development focuses on decision-making with reference to the participation of vulnerable groups, such as women (SDG target 5.5), young people and those with disabilities in the decision-making process.

We are now progressing our application to be accredited by the United Nations, with meetings taking place throughout the year with officials of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in Geneva. This year the EHRC has continued to develop internally with the completion and publication of our Governance Manual and continues to develop and review policy in line with international best practice guidelines to become an internationally accredited human rights institution. We have strengthened our data protection policies with the introduction of a retention and disposal policy for personal data.

Additionally, the Commission has maintained its reach to the local community with the EHRC website that is designed in a manner that allows for greater accessibility to human rights related resources for all. Furthermore, we continued to publish newsletters, ensuring that the community is informed and made aware of relevant, urgent and local human rights matters that impact them.

Much of our work continues to be helping individuals resolve their issues of discrimination and other Constitutional issues. This year we took 51 enquiries, raising 72 discrete issues. Most complaints were related to issues pertaining to health services and overseas referrals, with the next most common areas of complaint being issues with the police and prison followed by complaints related to employment in the public sector and mental health. We use what we learn through our individual dispute resolution service to advocate for changes to the structures, systems and policies that entrench inequality.

During the next year, the Commission will be focusing on Poverty and disability rights along with training, stakeholder engagement and raising awareness through a wide network of communication mediums that makes human rights accessible to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Pearce', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Pearce

Chair

ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The EHRC is an independent statutory body with responsibilities under the Commission for Equality & Human Rights Ordinance 2015. It 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 commissioners as of 31st March 2024 were:

Andrew Pearce	Chair
Sarah Iguna	Deputy Chair
Sibongile Muranganwa	Commissioner (until January 2024)
Janine Nyschens	Commissioner
Luke Bennett	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. 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 will focus on the priorities outlined in our latest Strategic Plan. 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 consider our mandate, expertise and the current needs in our community along with SHG's 10 Year Plan.

The EHRC has taken the opportunity of the change of Governance and SHG structure to review how we work, our role and purpose and to restructure to meet the opportunities our new working environment presents. Our Strategic Plan reflects this by linking the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to the most relevant SHG portfolio and defining actions which meet 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

St Helena Equality and Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2023-24 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.

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 A

In 2023–24 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 2023/24 were as follows:

Andrew Pearce - Infrastructure

Sarah Iguna – Health & Social Care

Sibongile Muranganwa – Education & Employment

Mr Luke Bennett – Safety Security & Home Affairs

Catherine Turner – Environment in addition to CEO role.

Janine Nyschens (Overseas) -Funding applications/streams and international Network development

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 103 new contacts from people believing they had a human rights complaints covering 138 themes. This was similar to the previous year. We closed the year with 17 open files requiring further input, legal advice/action, research or advocacy a decrease of 32%.

Table 1	2022/23	2023/24
New Contacts	101	103
Themes Raised	136	138
Files Closed during the year (includes files opened in previous years).	88	96
Files remaining open as of 31st March	25	17

FIG. 1

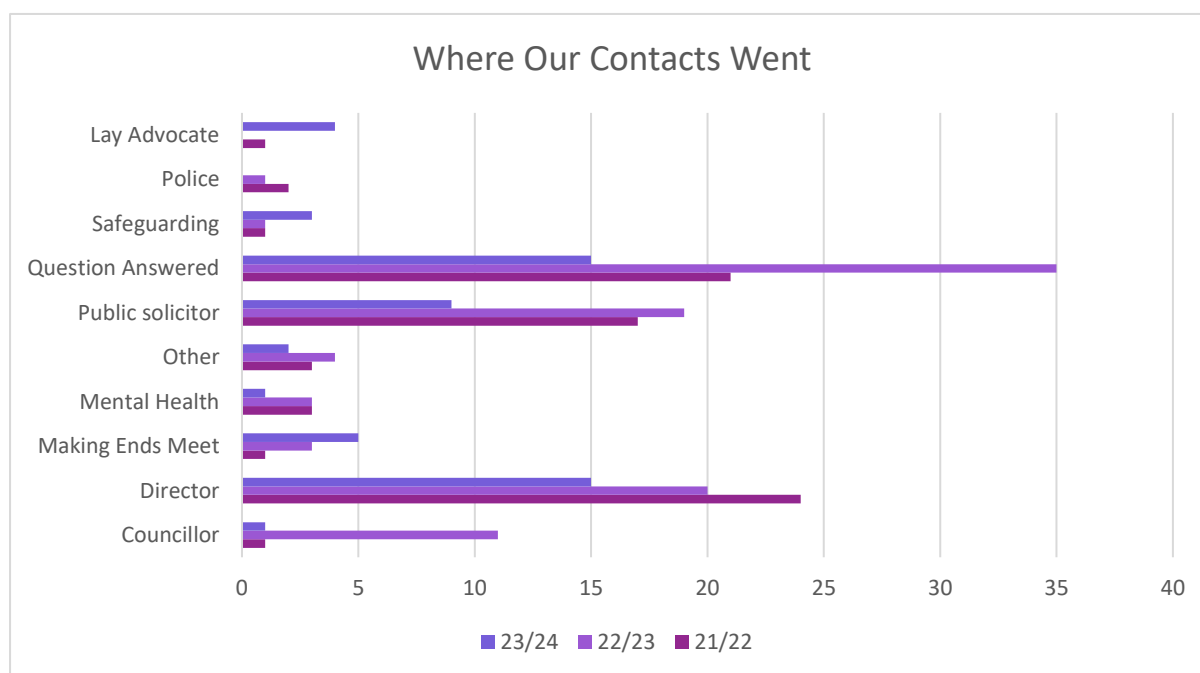


Fig 2 Shows the number of clients referred to other agencies.

The EHRC had 138 new contacts during the year under review and closed 96 files (see fig 1). Some 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, others may have required several weeks or months getting to the bottom of the problem. 20 issues were passed to the relevant SHG Director and/ or Officer, in particular the Health, Benefits, Human Resources and Housing departments. There was an increase in calls to the Prison, but these mostly related to issues outside the prison.

19 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 16 clients that fall within this category.

Other cases have been referred to Councillors as they are constituency matters i.e., roads, health and noise.

35 of the contacts were assisted by the EHRC without the need for further help.

AREAS OF RISK TO SHG

- (1) At the end of March 2023 four 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 the rest will be reviewed during 2024/25 if the funding for legal work is agreed, hopefully reducing the financial and reputational risk to SHG.**
- (2) There has been an increase in questions about the right to health. The majority of these fit into two categories:**
 - (a) Medical negligence**
 - (b) Patients on the waiting list for overseas medical referral.**
- (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 several 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.**
- (4) 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.**

COMPLAINT SUBJECT

The Commission finalised 96 client files in the period under review, including files that were opened in previous financial years. There was a very small rise in both number of clients and the number of issues raised by complainants this year. The EHRC believes that more people are coming to the office now it is away from the Castle. There has also been a shift in the areas of concern. As Fig 3 shows the most complaints were on Benefits (including Basic Island Pension (BIP), Carers Allowances and Better Life Allowances (BLA)) and poverty issues; those on low incomes cannot cope with ever increasing food and fuel prices.

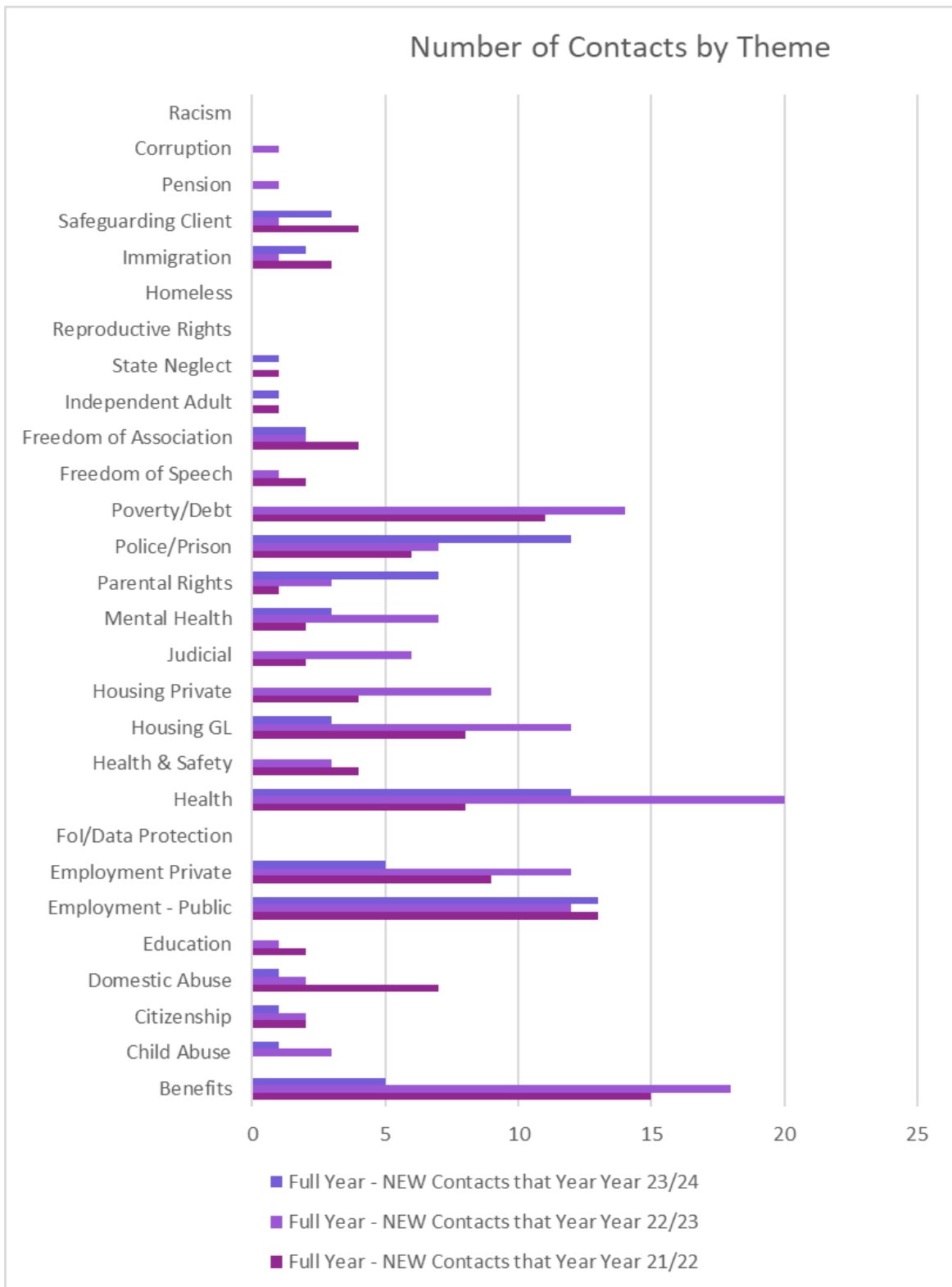


Fig 3 Subjects/issues raised by contacts

Next came health, while the Dr Sergio case has led to more people seeking advice from us on issues of compensation, confidentiality and representation, complaints on access to overseas medical referrals have also increased.

Here was an increase in the number of calls to the prison these were mainly due to issues outside the prison for example access to children, housing and employment on release.

There has been a significant increase in the number of contacts on public sector employment, these are almost without exception due to the inability of staff in the care sector to take leave and to do due to staff shortages.

BENEFITS AND POVERTY

Benefit have not been increased in line with inflation and some payments have not been increased for years. The number of families claiming Income Related Benefits at the end of March 2023 was 245 this rose to 270 by 31st March 2024 and the trend is upwards.¹ 833 were in receipt of Basic Island Pension up slightly on previous years this had risen to 853 by 31st March 2024. 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.

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

While benefits like the BIP and IRB have been increased, they are not keeping pace with inflation.

The increased cost of transport is causing problems for those who live in outlying districts (especially those on benefits) accessing medical care. It is expensive to travel to the hospital for appointments especially if tests are required as these can rarely all be arranged for the same visit. People in Blue Hill for example only have access to public transport on the last Thursday of the month this allows them only 3 hours in town. Therefore, hospital appointments usually necessitate a very helpful neighbour or £30 for taxi fare. Not possible on £80 per week pension.

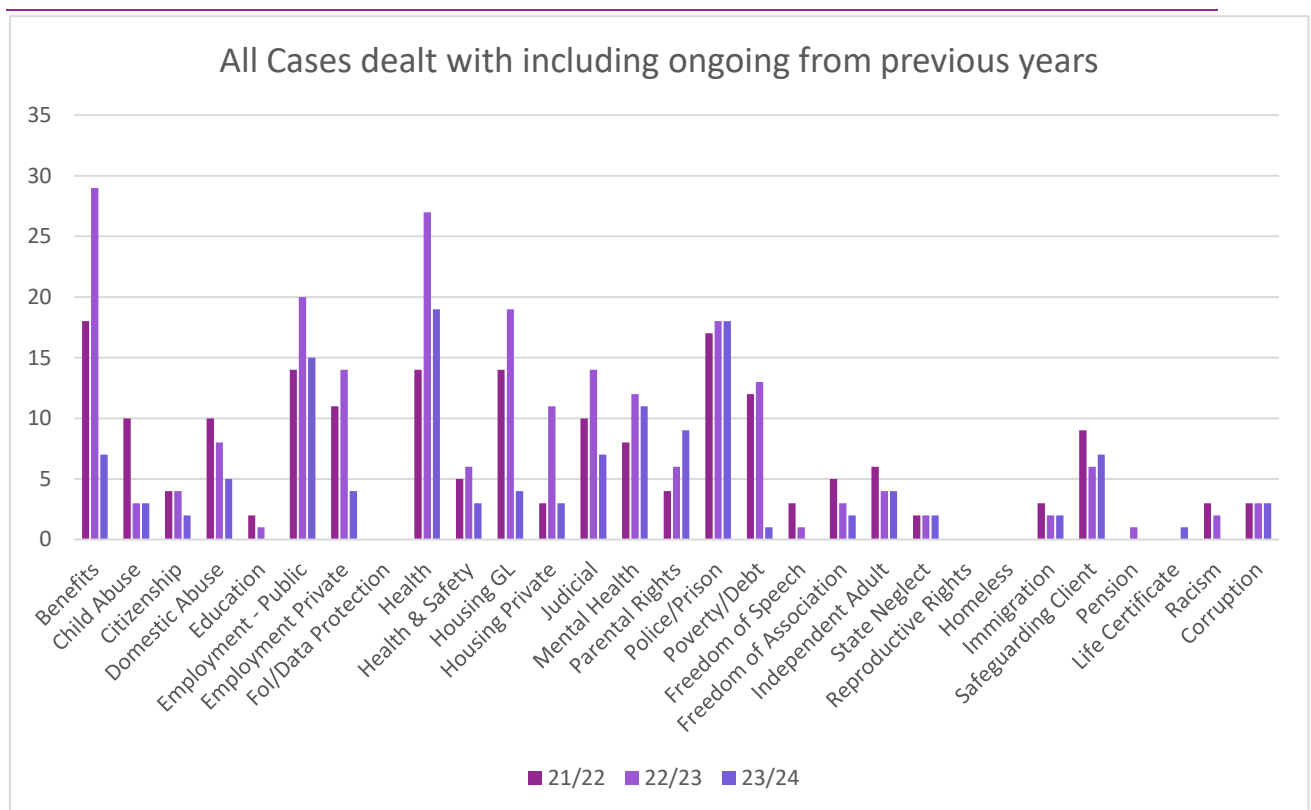
The EHRC is often told by our clients that they are going without medication or taking it every other day as they cannot afford the medication or to travel to the pharmacy.

HEALTH

¹ <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/st-helena/statistics/st-helena-in-figures/social/#unemployment>

As mentioned above, during the reporting period access to adequate health has been the area attracting the most concerns. The issues around the orthopaedic surgeon are the subject of police investigation were expected to reach court in the second half of 2023 however no case has been settled to date and the EHRC clients are looking at trial dates of October-November 2025. The other issues brought to the EHRC include:

1. A culture of bullying among medical staff
2. Long waits for medical referrals
3. Long waiting times for chemotherapy drugs to arrive



GOVERNMENT LANDLORD HOUSING (GLA)

Housing and Homelessness was the subject of a special report publicised in December 2021. This report identified the gaps in current domestic legislation and how many people are still denied the basic human right to adequate housing on a daily basis. It is disappointing to note that SHG have yet address the EHRC’s concerns and recommendations yet complaints about GLH remain high.

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The 6 most complained about protected characteristics/vulnerability are listed in table 2 below:

Protected Characteristic	Total complaints
Disability	8
Age	5
Children's Rights	3

DISABILITY ISSUES

Complaints centred around disability issues remain a concern major. Access to homes, work and 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 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.

AGE

The age-related issues were very elderly people being charged for medical expenses who should have been offered medical exemption certificates and concerns raised by clients in care facilities.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

These were all children struggling with access to absent parents.

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. We provide information to SHG, Ministers, Elected Members and the Office of the Governor. Of note during this year are:

1. Children's Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals have been a specific focus through the year. Our Children's Commissioner has developed a research strategy for carrying out an audit of children's rights. Training on Children's Safeguarding took place during this reporting period.
2. 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.
3. 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. A Gender Action Plan for the island is being developed creating a clear plan for the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It will also present an opportunity for the 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.

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

- Elder Abuse Awareness
- White Ribbon Day.
- Victim's Support Service
- Safeguarding Board
- Serving on the Board of SAMS

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 2022–23 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.

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 our Human Rights Noticeboard 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>

Website sthelenaehrc.org

SUBMISSIONS TO THIRD PARTIES

Again, this year, as continued fallout from the Covid Pandemic the submissions to the United Nations were put on hold however the EHRC has continued to prepare reports to the following UN committees:

- International Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The EHRC Report in due late 2023
- International Committee on Race Discrimination. The Date is to be confirmed.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child awaiting UN recommendations

The EHRC submitted comment to the Utilities Regulator on proposed tariff changes by Connect St Helena Ltd.

Constitution & Legislation

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 appears to have been no action to address the modern slavery concerns, despite raising the issue as a priority on several occasions. In the view of the EHRC this represents a huge reputational and financial risk to government and the UK.

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 and various religious organisations etc. in their personal time. The EHRC also is involved with several working groups including the Custody User Group, Police and Crime Panel and the Safeguarding board.

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 will form one cross-cutting themes of the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

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. We conduct investigations to identify and eliminate systemic discrimination. This year the EHRC has not had cause to conduct an inquiry however it has supported many of the claimants in the cases against SHG and/or Dr Sergio.

INTERVENTIONS

There have not been any interventions during the period under review.

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 2023/23 is at annex 1.

The proposed work plan for 23/24 is at annex 2.

The EHRC appeared before the Public Accounts Committee with no recommendations.

The commission closed the year on budget.

Annex C - Summary of target deliverables/ outputs

Financial Projections:

The table below shows the financial projections for 2023/24 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)	2023/24 £	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Ministers to bring the minimum wage above the minimum income standard (MIS). 	A Public Report to Ministers on Poverty levels and Current trends/Issues by age, gender, and ability	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Healthier Altogether Wealthier	800	Worked with Social Policy Planner, Labour Regulating Authority. Research conducted. 9 clients assisted with benefits/carer's allowance or other social payment issues.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for Basic Island Pension (BIP) and Income Related Benefits (BIP) to be increased to at least MIS. 	Capacity Building with Disabled Persons Aid, Age 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 and raised the issue of those who are refused benefits because they own land, they can neither use liquidate to put food on the table. Also Continued to lobby for UK state pensions paid on island to be index linked as they are in the UK
<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 basic services that it is open, 	Continue working with Housing to develop human rights-based policies and legislation to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable materials 	Effective Infrastructure Altogether Safer Altogether Healthier Altogether Greener	1000	Met with new property management team. Assisted them with their work defining standards.

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
<p>transparent and publicly understood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Push for legislation to protect both landlords and tenants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low cost/renewable energy and energy efficient • Fair division of risks and responsibilities of both lessee and lessor. 	<p>Altogether Better for Children and Young People</p>		<p>Gave feedback on Utility Tariffs to URA</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>
<p>Encourage increased educational attainment levels especially among boys</p>	<p>Talk to boys in school – survey to find out issues.</p>	<p>Altogether Better for Children and Young People</p> <p>Altogether Wealthier</p>	<p>2,500</p>	<p>Difficulties engaging with the school delayed the start of this work. The survey was developed. Funding from this was allocated to supporting claimants in the Sergio case.</p>

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
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 conducted by Consultant Helan Bryan produced base line report. Work is continuing
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 18 clients with employment related issues (13 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 early 2025. The EHRC has a representative on the Safeguarding board and the Police and Crime Panel Charging Policy developed

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	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.
Raise awareness of the importance of human rights in closed environments and how vulnerable individuals, particularly the young	Raise awareness through a campaign including a detailed booklet, press, radio and social media. Leaflets to be available to those detained and their families in the	Altogether Better for Children and Young People Altogether Safer	2000	This was not achieved in the form originally stated. It will be completed in 24/25. The medical negli-

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
and people with disabilities can assert their rights	Prison, the hospital and through the courts and Public Solicitors Office			<p>gence 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.</p> <p>In addition, the EHRC has a representative on the Safeguarding board and the Police and Crime Panel</p>
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 rights principles, norms, and standards.	Altogether Safer	1500	

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	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 detailed 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	
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 Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	Nil	<p>Work was conducted to support the re-boot of the Youth Parliament.</p> <p>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 24/25.</p> <p>In addition the EHRC has a representative on the Safeguarding board and</p>

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
				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.
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 56 new clients and 31 clients carried

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
				over at the start of the year.
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	
<p>Lobby for changes in the Constitution to reflect the right of self-determination, ISESCR</p> <p>Facilitate the Conversation about St Helena's relationship with the UK.</p> <p>Work with the change team to ensure the project and outcome is human rights compliant.</p>	Commit to playing a full and active role in the review of the Constitution	Effective, Efficient and Accountable Public Sector	10,000	<p>The EHRC has conducted its review of the Constitution and has kept in communication with Elected Members who have also raised concerns.</p> <p>Research has been amassed on Scrutiny and accountability, Self-determination and the much needed inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights.</p>

Organisation Priority	Outputs	National Goal (St Helena Government Vision & Strategy April 2022 – March 2025)	2023/24 £	Outcome
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 Altogether Better for Children and Young People	1,000	