



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta
an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Annual Report 2024

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The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was established under statute on 1 November 2014 to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland, to promote a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding, to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality, and to work towards the elimination of human rights abuses and discrimination.

Contents

Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas	2
Message from the Chief Commissioner	3
Who we are	6
Commission Members in 2024	7
Report of activity	8
Equipping individuals to better vindicate their rights	10
Strengthening legislation and addressing gaps	48
Monitoring, reporting and enforcement	56
Developing policies and programmes	67
Enhancing the standards of anti-trafficking response in Ireland	72
Establishing the UNCRPD Independent Monitoring Mechanism	77
Equality and human rights on the island of Ireland	81
Engagement and communication	83
Corporate Governance and Structure	103
Reporting	113
Appendix 1: Commission Member Profiles	119
Appendix 2: Attendance at Commission Meetings	124
Appendix 3: Attendance at Committees	126
Appendix 4: Commission staff	129
Appendix 5: Additional financial disclosures	130
Appendix 6: Publications	133
Appendix 7: Grants	138
Appendix 8: Your Rights data	151
Appendix 9: Monitoring Implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty	154

Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas

I hereby submit the annual report of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to the Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to section 28(1) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. This annual report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024.



Liam Herrick

Chief Commissioner

Message from the Chief Commissioner

This year saw global geopolitical developments continue to challenge the equality and human rights agenda worldwide, with many ripple effects being felt at home here in Ireland. During such periods of uncertainty and change, our Commission's statutory mandate to promote and protect equality and human rights is increasingly important. Having been appointed Chief Commissioner in November, I am honoured to take on the responsibility of leading the Commission through the coming years and the challenges our evolving environment will bring.

Strengthening equality and rights protections in our legal and policy framework is a central element of IHREC's work. This year we made observations on draft legislation with implications for rights in areas including policing and housing. We published research to further the evidence base for strengthening protections, for example on access to justice for disabled people. We made policy statements and submissions on a range of issues, amongst which was our Policy Statement on Socio-Economic Status as a ground of discrimination. The inclusion of a socioeconomic status ground is a key priority for the reform of Ireland's equality legislation. In May, our conference *Achieving Equality at Work* brought worker and employer representatives together with policy makers to explore the importance of socioeconomic status ground in the context of work and employment.

One of our priorities was equipping individuals to better vindicate their rights and we used the full breadth of our legal powers towards this end. There was a 14% increase in contacts to our Your Rights service from members of the public seeking information about their rights under equality and human rights law. We continued providing legal assistance to members of the public in certain circumstances and we intervened as amicus curiae ('friend of the court') in important proceedings before the superior courts, for example in respect of redress for survivors of historic child sexual abuse.

In May, the High Court heard our case challenging the State's failure to provide for the basic needs, including accommodation, of people recently arrived in Ireland and seeking asylum. In its judgement delivered on 1 August, the Court declared that the State had failed in its duty to provide for the basic needs for such applicants and that this failure amounted to a breach of their right to human dignity. The State filed a notice of appeal against the judgement in November, with the appeal listed for hearing in the Court of Appeal in March 2025.

Engaging with key stakeholders nationally and internationally to further the protection of equality and human rights in the State is an important aspect of our work. We provided evidence to Oireachtas Committees considering the rights of disabled people and the Traveller Community. Ahead of the general election in November, we issued recommendations for the next programme for government to all political parties. We carried out significant engagement with public bodies to monitor and promote compliance with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Supporting our crucial partners in civil society remained a priority, for example through our grants scheme and event space offering.

At the international level, we engaged with a range of treaty monitoring bodies reviewing Ireland's compliance with international human rights law on key issues, such as the prevention of torture, racism and intolerance, and economic, social and cultural rights. These monitoring processes are a vital component of the international human rights framework, resulting in concrete expert recommendations on how the State can better meet its human rights obligations. Close cooperation with our networks of fellow equality and human rights institutions is another strand of our international work. Of note this year was our work with Equinet, the European Network of Equality Bodies, in relation to the new EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies which entered into force in June. These new standards are a critical strengthening of the equality law framework at a time when, across Europe, the principles of equality and protection of human rights are increasingly under attack.

As an organisation, our statutory mandate continues to expand as we take on new roles and functions. We were designated as one of the bodies with responsibility to monitor fundamental rights in relation to the EU Artificial Intelligence Act. We established a new dedicated team to lead our work as Ireland's 'Independent Monitoring Mechanism' for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ('UNCRPD'). In addition, our work as Ireland's Independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings continued, as we launched our Third Evaluation Report on the State's efforts to tackle and address human trafficking in Ireland.

This was the final year of our current strategic cycle. To inform our priority aims and objectives for the next strategic period, which will run 2025-2027, we carried out various stakeholder engagement and consultation exercises throughout the year. These included a public consultation, key stakeholder interviews, targeted meetings with specific rights holder groups, and three thought forum events to examine emerging and evolving equality and human rights issues. Our sincere thanks to all who generously offered their time to participate in these consultation exercises and inform our Strategy Statement 2025-2027, which we look forward to launching in early 2025.

This was our 10th year as Ireland's national human rights and equality body. To mark the occasion, we held an anniversary event on Human Rights Day in December to acknowledge the collective contribution of the Commission and its stakeholders in advancing human rights and equality over the past decade. You can see some of our impacts over the 10 years highlighted throughout the report. Looking ahead to the next 10 years, we look forward to continuing our close cooperation with partners and stakeholders as we work towards our shared mission of a just and inclusive Ireland.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Liam Herrick".

Liam Herrick

Chief Commissioner

Who we are

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission ('the Commission') was established on 1 November 2014, as an independent public body under the IHREC Act 2014. We are Ireland's independent National Human Rights Institution ('NHRI') and National Equality Body ('NEB').

We protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland.

We are the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for Ireland under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the independent National Rapporteur on the Trafficking of Human Beings; and will be assigned the role of the Co-ordinating National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, pending ratification. Alongside Northern Ireland's national human rights and equality bodies, we have a mandate to consider and report on equality and rights issues with an island of Ireland dimension. We also have legal powers under the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, and a role in relation to the EU Artificial Intelligence ('AI') Act.

Statutory mandate

We have a statutory remit to:

- Protect and promote human rights and equality;
- Encourage the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality, and intercultural understanding in the State;
- Promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights and equality in the State;
- Encourage good practice in intercultural relations, promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity in the State and respect for the freedom and dignity of each person; and
- Work towards the elimination of human rights abuses, discrimination and prohibited conduct.

The Commission Members are appointed by President Michael D. Higgins, following a resolution by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

We operate independently of Government, with our institutional independence guaranteed in our establishing legislation, which provides for accountability of the Commission for our statutory functions to the Oireachtas.

Commission Members in 2024



Liam Herrick - Chief
Commissioner*



Noeline Blackwell



Jim Clarken



Michael Finucane



Dr Andrew Forde



Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC



Adam Harris



Professor Colin Harvey



Professor Kathleen Lynch



Dr Salome Mbugua



Dr Rosaleen McDonagh



Sunniva McDonagh SC



Dr Lucy Michael



Professor Ray Murphy



Eoin Ronayne

*Sinéad Gibney stepped down as Chief Commissioner in February 2024.

Liam Herrick took up post as Chief Commissioner in November 2024.

Report of activity

This Annual Report covers the third year of our Strategy Statement 2022- 2024. It sets out our activities during 2024 to advance each of the Commission's five strategic priorities:

1. Economic equality
2. Justice
3. Respect and recognition
4. Futureproofing
5. Public Sector Duty

We report on our activities to advance our strategic priorities under the headings:

1. Equipping individuals to better vindicate their rights
2. Strengthening legislation and addressing gaps
3. Monitoring, reporting and enforcement
4. Developing policies and programmes
5. Enhancing the standards of Anti-Trafficking response in Ireland
6. Establishing the UNCRPD Independent Monitoring Mechanism
7. Equality and human rights on the island of Ireland
8. Engagement and communication

Section nine then reports on how we have delivered on our corporate and compliance responsibilities during the year under review.

Finally, in section ten, we report on our obligations under:

- Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014; and
- The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021

Equipping
individuals to
better vindicate
their rights

Your Rights Information Service

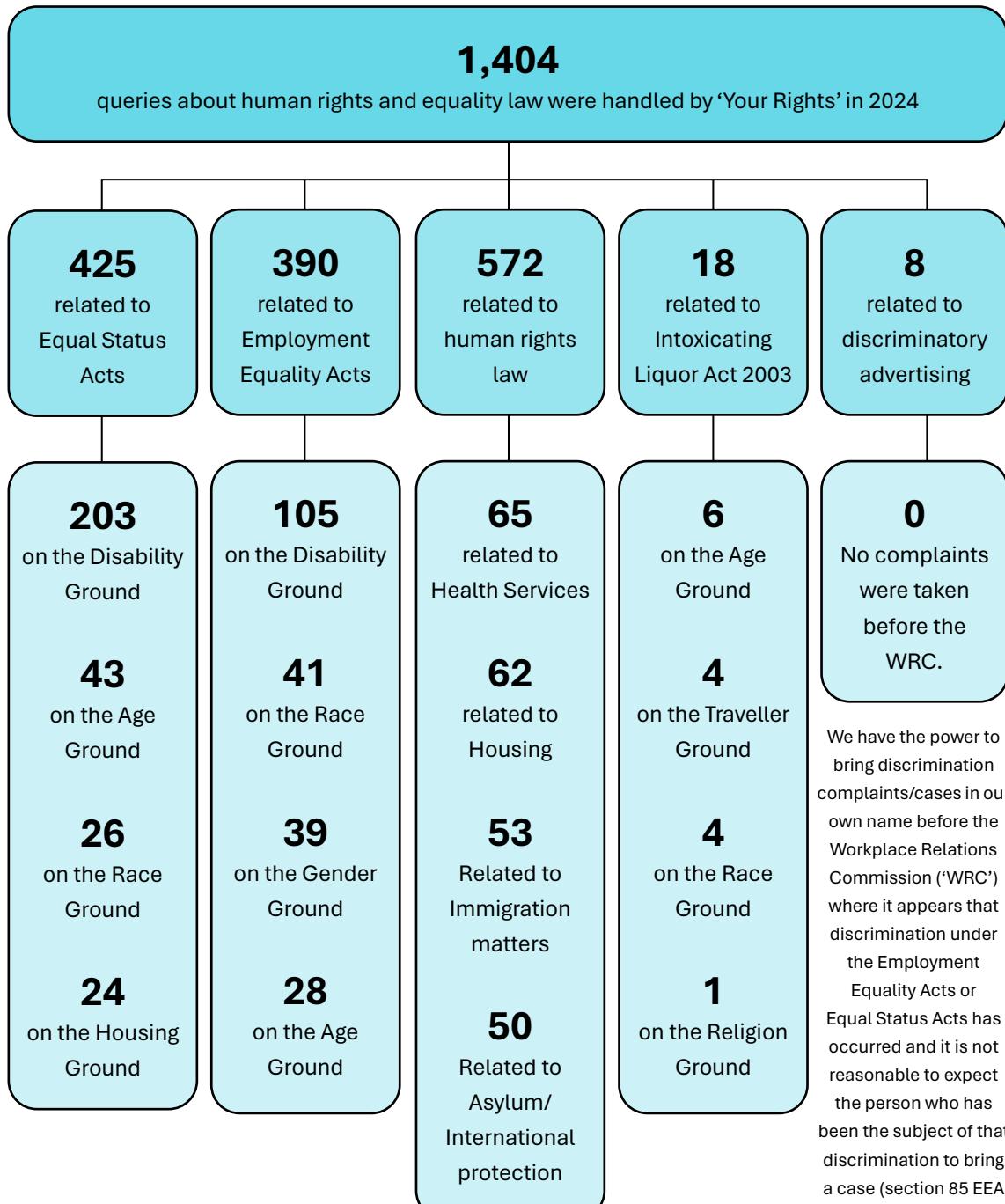
We operate the Your Rights Information Service to provide members of the public with information about their rights under equality and human rights law in Ireland. The service provides information about the options people may have if they believe they have experienced discrimination, or that their rights have been breached.

The service received **4,472** contacts from the public, by phone, email and letter, a **14%** increase on contacts received in 2023*.

1,784 (40%) of the **4,472** contacts resulted in unique queries from members of the public, by phone, email and letter, a **3%** increase on queries received in 2023. The Service responded **2,571** times in relation to the received queries.

While the purpose of the service is to provide individuals with information relating to human rights and equality law in Ireland, it also provides information about other organisations and resources that may be of assistance, based on the nature of a person's query.

*The service received 3828 contacts in 2023

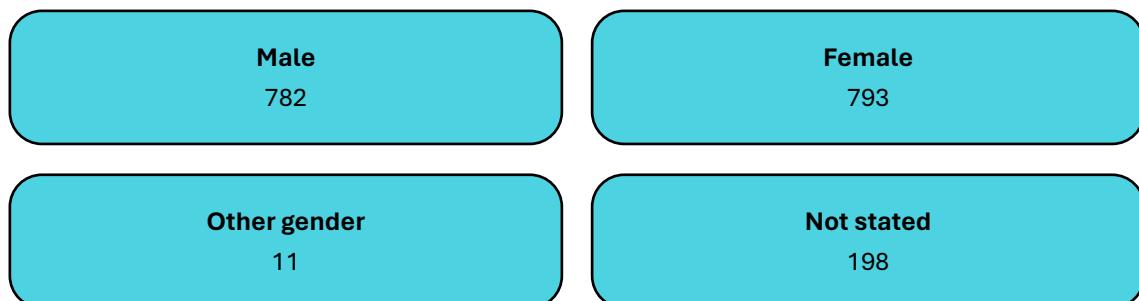


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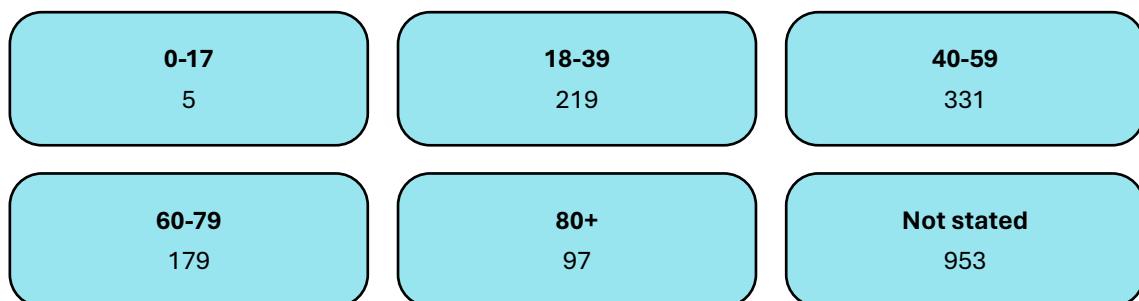
were beyond our remit and where appropriate, resulted in referrals to other information resources or services, including for example the Workplace Relations Commission ('WRC'), Ombudsman's' offices, regulatory bodies such as the Data Protection Commission and Consumer Protection Commission, or to the Legal Aid Board and Free Legal Advice Centres ('FLAC').

Who is contacting the Your Rights Information Service

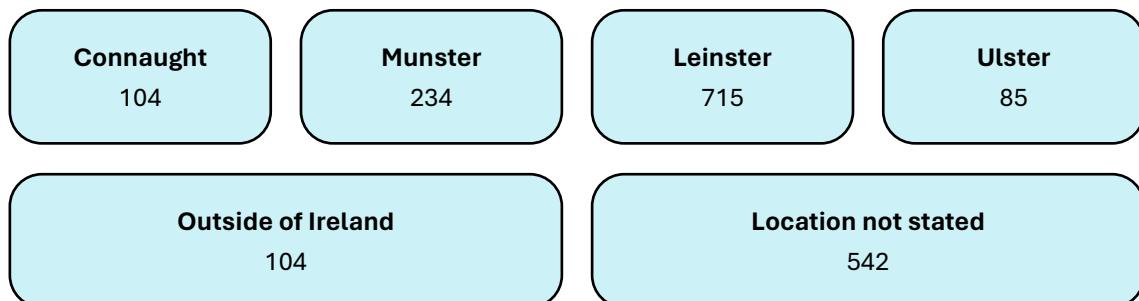
— Gender



— Age



— Location



Providing legal assistance to individuals

Under Section 40 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, we can, in certain circumstances set down in law, give legal assistance to members of the public who wish to take a case relating to equality or human rights law before the Workplace Relations Commission ('WRC'), the Labour Court or the courts. The assistance provided can include legal advice only or legal advice and representation.

At the beginning of the year, we had 269 individual clients who had been granted legal assistance and whose cases were ongoing. Of these, 62 had been approved for legal advice and 207 had been approved for legal advice and representation. A further 16 applicants were awaiting a decision on their application for assistance.

Applications for legal assistance

In addition to the 16 applications carried over from 2023, a further 271 new individual applications for legal assistance were received during the year.

This year:

- 155 applications were approved for assistance in the first instance, of which:
 - 5 approvals were for practical assistance only;
 - 76 approvals were for legal advice only;
 - 17 approvals were for practical assistance and limited representation; and
 - 57 approvals were for legal advice and representation;
- 88 applications were declined; and
- 7 applications were withdrawn or discontinued.

We completed work on 66 individual cases assisting 111 clients. 28 clients, across 22 individual cases, were granted legal advice only, while 83 clients, across 44 individual cases, were provided with legal advice and representation.

Details of these completed matters including some that had been opened in previous years are set out in the tables below.

Legal advice assistance completed

During the year, 28 clients relating to 22 case files were granted legal advice assistance, but not legal representation, across the following areas:

Ground of Discrimination	No. of Clients	Advice only under the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to an incident of discriminatory dismissal and failure to provide reasonable accommodation by her former employer.
Gender / Sexual Harassment	1	We provided legal advice to this client who brought a discrimination complaint to the WRC against their employer for sexual harassment and related discrimination on the grounds of gender and disability.
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client regarding two issues. The first was in relation to a housing issue and the second was in relation to reasonable accommodation in the workplace.
Race	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to his complaint for discrimination to the WRC for alleged issues of victimisation and racial harassment. Legal advice was offered however he ultimately did not take up on the offer.
Religion	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to a potential complaint of discrimination on the ground of religion in respect of the dress code required by the employer.

Ground of Discrimination	No. of Clients	Advice only under the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to a complaint of failure to provide reasonable accommodation by a university.
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client regarding the potential enforcement of a WRC decision, which awarded her compensation for discrimination by a restaurant for refusing her entry with her registered guide dog.
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to a complaint of discrimination against a restaurant.
Disability	2	We provided legal advice to this client, who is the mother of a child with a disability, in respect of access to suitable social housing.
Housing	1	We provided legal advice to this client when his landlord refused to accept the Housing Assistance Payment.
Age	1	We provided legal advice to this client when she was refused a student discount by her gym due to her age.

Ground of Discrimination	No. of Clients	Advice only under the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018
Disability	2	We provided legal advice to two clients, a parent and a child with a disability, in respect of discrimination in accessing to education.
Membership of the Traveller Community	1	We provided legal advice to this minor client, who was asked to leave a supermarket store.
Housing	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to a priority transfer application based on medical need to a County Council.
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to failure to provide reasonable accommodation in the provision of transport services.
Disability	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to accessibility of communications from a service provider.
Marital Status	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to a statutory requirement to pay Capital Acquisition Tax based on her marital status.

Ground of Discrimination	No. of Clients	Advice only under the Intoxicating Liquor Acts 1988 - 2018
Membership of the Traveller Community	1	We provided legal advice to this client who was refused entry to a restaurant, despite having a reservation.
Membership of the Traveller Community	2	We provided legal advice to two clients who were refused service at a GAA club (a licensed premises).
Membership of the Traveller Community	4	We provided legal advice to four clients who were discriminated by a licensed premises.

Issue	No. of Clients	Advice only relating to Human Rights
Gender Based Violence	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to their experience with the criminal justice systems as a victim of a crime.
Housing	1	We provided legal advice to this client in relation to his eviction from temporary protection accommodation.

Legal representation assistance completed

Cases under the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018

Case: An Individual v A National Service Provider

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal assistance to a client in relation to an ESA claim of discrimination on the ground of disability before the WRC. The client in this case was refused service over the phone when she attempted to gain access to the service with the assistance of an ISL interpreter. On a later date, she attended at a local branch to access the service and did so without the provision of an ISL interpreter.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, that claim has now been settled on terms satisfactory to the client.

Case: An Individual v. An Accommodation Service Provider

Ground: Race / Family Status

Number of clients: 2

Issue: We provided legal advice and legal representation to a client in relation to the discrimination and harassment she experienced while residing in temporary protection accommodation.

The client fled Ukraine with her minor daughter. On arrival in the State, she was granted temporary protection. The client was allocated hotel accommodation along with fellow temporary protection applicants. The client raised issues with the conditions of the hotel to management. Following this, management began to harass the client including making verbal and written threats to report the client to Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) for neglect of her daughter.

A complaint was submitted to the WRC under the ESA on the grounds of race and family status.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the matter settled to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: A Pupil (Minor suing by his Next Friend) v A Primary School

Ground: Disability and Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to this client in relation to his exclusion from an event hosted by his primary school.

A complaint was submitted to the WRC under the ESA on the grounds of disability.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the case settled to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: A Syrian Refugee v A High Street Bank

Ground: Race

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation before the WRC to a Syrian refugee who has been living and working in Ireland for several years. He applied to the bank for a joint account for him and his wife. He provided all relevant documents and information required. Despite this, and despite open and transparent engagement with the bank over the course of several weeks, the bank opened and then immediately closed the joint bank account on the basis that it was “non-compliant” with unspecified criteria.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the matter settled to the satisfaction of the client at mediation.

Case: Members of the Traveller Community v An Education Service Provider

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 9

Issue: We provided advice, practical assistance and limited representation to nine separate clients in relation to an alleged incident of discrimination when they were trying to access services within the education service.

A discrimination complaint under the ESA was submitted to the WRC on the grounds of Membership of the Traveller Community.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the case settled to the satisfaction of all clients.

Case: A Member of the Traveller Community (A Minor, suing by his Next Friend) v A Café

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We granted legal advice and representation to a minor client who was refused service in a local café. The client is a member of the Traveller Community.

A complaint of discrimination under the grounds of Membership of the Traveller Community was submitted to the WRC under the ESA.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the matter settled favourably for the client, who received financial compensation.

Case: An Individual v A Shop

Ground: Race and membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided a grant of legal advice and representation to a client in relation to an incident of discrimination when trying to purchase goods in a store. The client attended at a local convenience store with his daughter and attempted to purchase goods. He was refused service at the till. No reason was offered for the refusal. The client initiated a complaint under the ESA before the WRC for discrimination on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community and race.

Outcome: The WRC ruled that there was prohibited conduct in the shop denying the client a service on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community and he was harassed. He was awarded €6,000 in compensation for the effects of the discrimination.

Case: A Patient v A Public Health Service

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an individual with a visual impairment in respect of accessibility of communications by two separate public health services.

The two complaints related to the accessibility of communications, including appointment letters and prescriptions. The client contended that sending him appointment letters and prescriptions by post did not enable him to access the health services independently and that such correspondence should be sent to him by email as a reasonable accommodation in light of his disability.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, both complaints settled to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: An ISL User v A Bank

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client in respect of a bank's failure to provide reasonable accommodation. In this case, the bank required the client to undergo a verification process online prior to opening an account. The Bank did not provide the option for him to have the assistance of an ISL interpreter. The client lodged a complaint under the ESA in the WRC.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, a settlement agreement was reached to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: A Family v Offaly County Council

Ground: Housing

Number of clients: 4

Issue: We offered practical assistance, advice and limited representation to a family of four (two adults and two young children) in relation to the refusal of Offaly County Council to complete an appropriate homelessness assessment without the household submitting a “completed” social housing application before being assessed for homeless service.

Outcome: Offaly County Council processed the family’s homelessness assessment and were offered vouchers for emergency accommodation.

Case: An ISL user v a Service Provider

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client in relation to a complaint of discrimination on the ground of disability and the failure of the service provider to provide reasonable accommodation.

The client is deaf and sought to cancel a broadband contract with a broadband service provider. However, he was informed that he was unable to cancel his contract via the Irish Text Relay Service (a service that enables people who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired to make and receive calls independently) and that he would need to get someone else to make a telephone call on his behalf to cancel the broadband contract. The client was unable to cancel his broadband contract when he attended the service provider’s store.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the matter was settled on satisfactory terms to the client.

Case: A Pregnant Woman v A Hospital

Ground: Race / Membership of the Roma Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client, who was in late-stage pregnancy when she attended the maternity ward of a hospital complaining of extreme pain and bleeding. She was not provided with an interpreter when attending the hospital. A claim was filed under the ESA with the WRC.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, this matter settled favourably to the satisfaction of the client, with the client receiving financial compensation and a written apology.

Case: A Customer (A Minor Suing by his Next Friend) v A Store

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and legal representation to this minor client, who is autistic and sensory needs. As a result, the client prefers to keep his hood up while in public.

The client and his father were visiting a store when a staff member requested that the client remove his hood. The client's father explained that he has a medical condition and wore his hood up for this reason. The staff member did not accept this and ultimately asked the client to leave the store.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, this matter settled favourably to the satisfaction of the client, with the client receiving financial compensation and the staff members receiving disability training.

Case: A Homeless International Protection Applicant v Hostels and A Bank

Ground: Race

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a homeless International Protection Applicant, who was not provided with accommodation by the International Protection Accommodation Service upon arrival in the State.

The client was refused entry to two hostels on the basis that he did not have identity documents. The hostels refused to accept his Temporary Residence Certificate card or Public Service Card as a form of identity.

In addition, the client attempted to open a bank account. The bank stated that proof of address was required and that they do not accept a PO box number as proof of address.

Outcome: Following receipt of our legal advice on this matter, the client instructed that he did not want to proceed further with his case.

Case: A Student v the State Examinations Commission

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 2

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to two clients, a parent and a 14-year-old Junior Certificate candidate, in relation to a refusal by the State Examinations Commission ('SEC') to provide reasonable accommodation for a student to take their Junior Certificate exams.

The student client has severe visual impairment. The clients wrote to the SEC in relation to the upcoming Junior Certificate examination in 2024. They requested modified exam papers as the student is unable to access visual images.

The SEC refused provision of digital papers. This refusal was based on security and integrity concerns regarding the examinations process. A complaint of disability discrimination was made to the WRC.

Outcome: The case settled prior to WRC adjudication on the basis that the SEC would:

- extend the scope of its current pilot scheme for the provision of digital versions of standard examination papers in PDF format to include this candidate/client and all other eligible visually impaired Junior Cycle candidates at the 2024 examinations; and

- extend the scope of the pilot and provide digital versions of modified examination papers in PDF format for eligible visually impaired candidates, at both 2024 Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle examinations.

Case: An Individual v A Transport Provider

Ground: Age

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and limited representation to a client in relation to alleged discrimination in the provision of transport services.

Outcome: The client was provided with limited legal representation to assist him at mediation, however the matter did not progress to mediation due to the client's instructions.

Case: A Member of the Traveller Community v A Hotel

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client who alleged discrimination when trying to make a reservation with a hotel over the phone. When she provided her surname, the receptionist stated the booking could only be secured using a credit card. The client offered to book using a debit card, this was refused. The client phoned the hotel the following day providing a different surname, and the receptionist was willing to make the booking using a debit card.

Outcome: With the benefit of our legal assistance, the matter settled to the satisfaction of the client at mediation.

Legal representation only

Cases under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015

Case: A Prison Officer v The Minister for Justice

Ground: Race

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client who was subjected to constant racial and physical abuse by prisoners over a period of six years while working in a prison. No adequate steps were taken by his employer to address the ongoing abuse over a long period of time, despite ongoing and consistent engagement by the client with his employer. The WRC ruled in favour of the prison. The client appealed the decision to the Labour Court and then subsequently to the High Court on a point of law.

In the High Court, we successfully argued that the Labour Court had not provided sufficient reasons for reaching its conclusion. The High Court gave a ruling on costs awarding costs to the client. The substantive matter was remitted to the Labour Court in the meantime.

Outcome: The case settled prior to the hearing in the Labour Court to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: An Employee v An Employer

Ground: Age

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client, a 73-year-old woman, whose contract of employment was terminated by her employer. Her employer indicated that she had been employed on fixed term contracts since reaching the compulsory retirement age of 66. Her employer denied that the client was dismissed and asserted that she was merely not offered an extension of employment in accordance with the company's retirement policy.

We assisted the client in referring a complaint of age discrimination under the EEA before the WRC.

Outcome: In advance of the hearing, the matter was settled to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: Ronald Boyle and Brian Fitzpatrick v Commissioner of An Garda Síochána and Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform

Ground: Age

Number of clients: 2

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to two clients in relation to their complaints that the age restrictions enforced to stop those aged 35 and over from joining the Garda Síochána as trainees are discriminatory.

Outcome: The Minister appealed firstly the decision of the WRC, and thereafter the Labour Court, in favour of both men, to the High Court on a point of law. The Minister subsequently withdrew the appeals in January 2024.

The complainants received the maximum award of compensation available at the time of €12,700 each.

Note: The Minister has now introduced new Regulations raising the application age to 50 years – media report that a third of all applicants for the 2024 Garda recruitment campaign are between ages 35 and 49.

Case: An Employee v A Theatre

Ground: Sexual Harassment / Victimisation

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an employee of a theatre who made a complaint of sexual harassment against that theatre. After our client made the complaint, the theatre declined to hire them for several years, despite our client having a more than twenty-year history with the theatre before that. We assisted our client in referring a complaint of victimisation to the WRC.

Outcome: Prior to the hearing, the parties engaged in settlement talks, which resulted in the matter being resolved to client's satisfaction, and the matter being withdrawn from the WRC.

Case: An Employee v An Employer

Ground: Age

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an employee in relation to a claim of discrimination on the ground of age.

In this case, the client was made to retire from work on attaining the age of 66, on the basis that this was 'custom and practice'. The client claimed that there was no mandatory retirement age expressly provided for in his contract of employment or in the Employee handbook.

We assisted the client for to take a complaint under the EEA on the ground of age to the WRC.

Outcome: The claim settled on terms satisfactory to the client, who received compensation.

Case: A Candidate v A Public Employer

Ground: Age

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an applicant in respect of age discrimination in the recruitment process.

The client applied to be a Garda Trainee through publicjobs.ie. He progressed through stage 1 of the recruitment process. Before the interview at stage 2 of the process, the client received an email from the recruitment manager advising the client that on review of their documentation submitted, they were not eligible for the Garda Trainee 2023 competition as candidates were required to be 18 years of age but not yet 35 years of age. The client complained that they were discriminated against in the recruitment process on account of their age.

We provided legal advice and representation for the client to take a case to the WRC, up to mediation.

Outcome: The case settled to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: An Employee v Irish Prison Service

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to this client for a hearing of his appeal before the Labour Court. This hearing related to an appeal by the Irish Prison Service against the decision of the WRC under the EEA, which found that the IPS had failed to provide reasonable accommodation to the client that would have enabled him to return to his duties as a Prison Officer. The WRC awarded €40,000 compensation.

Outcome: In its determination, the Labour Court found that the client had failed to establish that he had a disability at the relevant time. The Labour Court upheld the IPS' appeal and set aside the decision of the WRC.

Case: An Employee v An Employer

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client in relation to an incident of disability discrimination and failure to provide reasonable accommodation by the client's employer.

The client was promoted at work and moved from a small office building to a large open plan office. The client has a number of disabilities and informed his employer that he was experiencing difficulties at work due to his new working location. His employer authorised the client for ill-health retirement. The client alleged this decision was made without proper consideration for the provision of reasonable accommodation to enable him to remain in work. The client believes he was subjected to discrimination on the ground of disability and failure to provide reasonable accommodation.

Legal advice and representation was provided to the client at mediation of the complaint before the WRC.

Outcome: The matter was successfully mediated, and settlement was reached to the satisfaction of the client.

Case: An Applicant v An Employer

Ground: Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client in relation to an EEA claim for discrimination experienced on the grounds of disability, and the failure to provide reasonable accommodation by his employer before the WRC.

The applicant was a long-term employee of an organisation whose request for reasonable accommodation arising from his disabilities was refused. The client alleged that the employer organisation failed to engage meaningfully with him to address the situation. He further argued that he experienced discrimination on the ground of disability when he applied for a promotion within the organisation. He was informed that he was not appointed to the promoted role due to the level of sick leave he had taken, and some of this sick leave had arisen due to his disabilities.

Outcome: The matter was settled to the satisfaction of the client, including a promotion and compensatory payment for the client.

Case: An Employee v A Hotel

Ground: Race and Disability

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal assistance to a client in relation to a complaint against his former employer, a hotel.

While working at the hotel, the client, a foreign national, complained to management that he was being excluded from workplace conversations by his teammates, who spoke a different language and refused to speak English. When the client disclosed that the situation was taking a toll on his mental health, management told him that he had to be “100% fit” for work or risk being sent home.

The client referred a complaint of discrimination on the ground of race and disability to the WRC and the Commission provided limited legal representation for WRC mediation.

Outcome: We engaged with the hotel on the client’s behalf. The Commission provided limited legal representation for the mediation, which was ultimately unsuccessful, and this completed the Commission’s involvement in the matter.

Cases relating to Intoxicating Liquor Acts 1988 - 2018 ('ILA')

Case: Members of the Traveller Community v A Licensed Premises

Ground: Membership of Traveller Community

Number of clients: 3

Issue: We provided legal advice and legal representation to a group of three clients who were refused service at a licensed premises.

The three clients, who are members of an extended family and members of the Traveller Community, attended a local bar to have a few drinks and play pool. After being served, the manager asked for proof of their Covid vaccination certificates, which the clients provided. Once the manager provided them with some change to play a game of pool, he informed them these drinks were the only drinks they would be served and requested that they leave the premises.

We assisted the clients in bringing a complaint of discrimination against the licensed premises to the District Court on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community.

Outcome: On the date of the hearing, the matter settled favourably and to the satisfaction of the complainants.

Case: Members of the Traveller Community v A Licensed Premises

Ground: Membership of Traveller Community

Number of clients: 5

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to five separate clients in relation to their refusal of service at a licensed premises in Co. Cork.

The clients, who were a group of friends and members of the Traveller Community, attended the licensed premises after having dinner in a local restaurant. One member of the group was eight months pregnant at the time. When they were being served by a member of staff, the owner intervened and refused service stating there was a private party that night. It did not appear to the clients that a private party was taking place and other customers confirmed to the clients that they were not part of a private party.

We assisted the clients in bringing a complaint of discrimination against the licensed premises in District Court proceedings on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community, including making legal submissions in respect of the application of the EU Race Directive and the reversal of the burden of proof.

Outcome: The clients were successful at hearing. The judge applied Article 8 of the Race Directive reversing the burden of proof required in equality cases under the ILA. The clients raised a *prima facie* case of discrimination. The respondent failed to successfully raise a defence. Judge Roberts ordered the respondent to compensate the clients in the amount of €11,500, undertake Traveller awareness training, issue an apology and publish a statement on the respondent's social media.

Case: Members of the Traveller Community v A Hotel

Ground: Membership of Traveller Community

Number of clients: 4

Issue: We provided legal advice and legal representation to a family of four clients (two parents and two children and are members of the Traveller Community) who were refused service in a hotel restaurant in Co. Limerick, despite having a reservation and the fact that empty tables were clearly available.

We assisted the clients in bringing a complaint of discrimination against the hotel to the District Court under the ILA on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community.

Outcome: The matter settled favourably to the clients, with the hotel issuing an apology and agreeing to pay compensation to them. The hotel also agreed to arrange equality and inclusion training for its staff and senior management.

Case: Members of the Traveller Community v A Hotel

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 2

Issue: We provided legal advice and legal representation to two clients, who are members of the Traveller Community, in relation to alleged discrimination when trying to access services from a hotel.

The client booked a package deal online for a night in a hotel and tickets for a concert onsite for herself and her partner. She subsequently received a telephone call from a member of hotel staff to say that she would not be allowed into the hotel. The clients nevertheless checked in without difficulty and proceeded to their room. Shortly thereafter, several members of staff approached the client and told her that she would need to leave the hotel and would not be allowed to attend the concert. The client's partner was also refused service by the hotel.

We assisted the clients in bringing a complaint of discrimination on the grounds of Membership of the Traveller Community against the hotel, in both District Court proceedings and the WRC Proceedings.

Outcome: The matter settled to the satisfaction of the clients, with the hotel issuing a letter of apology and agreeing to pay compensation to the clients.

Case: A member of the Traveller Community v A Licensed Premises

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an individual who is a member of the Traveller Community, after he was refused service in a licensed premises in Co. Wexford.

We assisted the client in bringing a complaint against the licensed premises in proceedings under the ILA before the District Court. The matter was struck out by the District Court in circumstances where the judge refused applications to apply Article 8 of the EU Race Directive, thereby reversing the burden of proof. In those circumstances, the client sought an adjournment to seek legal advice. The client did not want the hearing to proceed without the reversal of the burden of proof as provided for under Article 8 of the Race Directive. In those circumstances, the District Court struck the matter out.

The case was then brought before the High Court. The decision of the District Court Judge was challenged by way of judicial review proceedings in the High Court.

Outcome: The High Court did not consider the substantive issue and made a finding that the issue was moot as there was no ongoing proceedings before the District Court.

Case: A member of the Traveller Community v. A Pub

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client in relation to an incident of discrimination when trying to access services from a licensed premises. The client and a small number of friends, who were also members of the Traveller Community, were refused entry to a pub in Galway city. The client subsequently initiated proceedings in the District Court.

Outcome: The parties agreed to have the matter struck out, with no orders made, and the client was issued an apology from the pub, who stated that he should not have been refused entry on that occasion and the pub also apologised for the hurt and embarrassment caused to him for the refusal.

Case: Two Members of the Traveller Community v A Licensed Premises

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 2

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a couple, who are members of the Traveller Community, in relation to a refusal of entry to a licensed premises in Co. Donegal.

In this case, the clients sought to enter a local bar and they were refused entry by security at the door. A musical event was being held inside. The security staff said that it was a private event and that the clients did not have an invite to attend. The singer came outside and confirmed to the clients that it was not a private event. The clients have attended these musical events at the location on previous occasions without requiring an invite. The security then said that they simply could not allow the clients into the bar. We assisted the clients in bringing a complaint against the licensed premises in proceedings under ILA before the District Court.

Outcome: The case was heard before the District Court and it was settled to the satisfaction of the clients, with the licensed premises issuing a written apology and agreeing to pay compensation to the clients.

Case: Two Members of the Traveller Community and Another Individual v A Licensed Premises

Ground: Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 3

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a group of three clients, in relation to refusal of entry to a licensed premises.

The group of three clients included two members of the Traveller Community and their friend who is not a member of the Traveller Community. The doorman told the clients that there was a private party inside, and also claimed that one of the clients was inebriated.

We assisted the clients in bringing a claim of direct discrimination and discrimination by association on the grounds of membership of the Traveller Community under the ILA before the District Court.

Outcome: The District Court proceedings were withdrawn on consent.

Cases relating to human rights

Case: An Individual v The State

Ground: Immigration, Disability, Social Welfare

Number of Clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a client in relation to a decision made by the Social Welfare Appeals Office to disallow an appeal of a decision of the Social Welfare Services Office (“SWSO”). The client had been granted ‘leave to remain’ in Ireland by the State. She applied for disability allowance and was refused at first instance. She appealed that decision and was unsuccessful. On behalf of the client, we submitted a request to the Chief Appeals Officer to review the decision of the Social Welfare Appeals Office under section 318 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005.

Outcome: This review found that the Social Welfare Appeals Office had erred in law and fact and revised their decision. The client’s application for disability allowance was referred back to the Department of Social Protection and she has subsequently been granted disability allowance, back-dated to the date of her initial application.

Case: A Family v A Local Authority

Ground: Housing and Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 4

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a family in relation to their access to emergency accommodation, as well as discrimination arising in the course of their attempts to access same.

High Court Judicial Review proceedings were instituted on behalf of this family to seek access to homeless services of the local authority and the provision of emergency accommodation.

Outcome: The High Court granted leave to pursue the judicial review proceedings on an urgent basis and the matter subsequently resolved when the family were provided with emergency accommodation.

The Commission also assisted the family in pursuing two claims of discrimination before the WRC against the Local Authority arising out of the same set of facts, both of which resolved to the satisfaction of both parties.

Case: A Family v A Local Authority

Ground: Housing and Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of clients: 4

Issue: This family were provided with legal advice and limited representation in relation to their eviction from emergency accommodation.

The family were furnished with an eviction notice to leave their emergency accommodation centre within 24 hours with no alternative accommodation being provided.

Outcome: Following our intervention, the matter resolved favourably, with the clients being provided with alternative emergency accommodation by the relevant local authority.

Case: A Minor IP Applicant v Multiple Government Agencies

Ground: International Protection / Reception Conditions / Accommodation / Age

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an applicant for international protection whose age was in dispute and who was determined to be an adult by State agencies. We provided the client with legal advice in relation to the adequacy of his age and vulnerability assessment process, and the accommodation issues arising from same. We also provided legal representation by way of engagement with relevant statutory agencies to seek an age re-assessment and provision of age-appropriate accommodation and services, including attendance at a reassessment of his eligibility for Tusla services.

Outcome: The client was re-assessed as ineligible for Tusla services, however he was moved to accommodation suitable to his specific familial needs.

Case: A Minor IP Applicant v Multiple Government Agencies

Ground: International Protection / Reception Conditions / Accommodation / Age

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to an applicant for international protection whose age was in dispute and who was determined to be an adult by State agencies. We provided the client with legal advice in relation to the adequacy of his age and vulnerability assessment process, and the accommodation issues arising from same. The Commission also provided legal representation by way of engagement with relevant statutory agencies to seek an age re-assessment and provision of age-appropriate accommodation and services, including attendance at a reassessment of his eligibility for Tusla services.

Outcome: The client was re-assessed as eligible for Tusla services and was moved to appropriate accommodation.

Case: An Individual v A Government Department

Ground: Historical Institutional Abuse

Number of clients: 1

Issue: We provided advice, practical assistance and representation to a client to request her records and documents relating to her time spent in a Mother and Baby Home and on the making of a redress scheme application to the Mother and Baby Institutions Redress Scheme.

Outcome: Under the redress scheme, the client was awarded a HSE enhanced medical card and €17,500 general payment for her time spent in a scheduled institution.

Case: A Member of the Traveller Community and Ors v. Galway City Council, The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland and the Attorney General

Ground: Housing / Membership of the Traveller Community

Number of Clients: 7

Issue: We provided legal advice and representation to a family, who are members of the Traveller Community, in relation to their housing conditions. They had previously been residing in sub-standard conditions on a halting site. We assisted the family in initiating High Court plenary proceedings against the Local Authority and the State.

Outcome: As we were unable to make contact with the family over a considerable lengthy period of time, we applied to the High Court to come off record in the proceedings and consequently, our involvement in the proceedings concluded.

Case: An Applicant for International Protection (Minor) v. The Child & Family Agency

Ground: International Protection / Reception Conditions / Accommodation

Number of Clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice to the client in relation to the adequacy of his age and vulnerability assessment process, and the accommodation issues arising from same. We also provided legal representation by way of engagement with relevant statutory agencies to seek an age re-assessment and provision of age-appropriate accommodation and services, including attendance at a reassessment of his eligibility for Tusla services.

Outcome: The client was re-assessed as eligible for Tusla services and moved to appropriate accommodation.

Case: A Client v. International Protection Accommodation Service

Ground: International Protection / Reception Conditions / Accommodation

Number of Clients: 1

Issue: We provided legal advice and limited representation (to engage with relevant State Agencies) to a client, a person with a disability who sought assistance in relation to the suitability of the accommodation provided by the International Protection Accommodation Service.

Outcome: The client was provided with legal advice in relation to the legal remedies available to him regarding the suitability of his accommodation, and the strengths and weaknesses of his case.

— Quotes:

“I am satisfied with the outcome as I got justice against an unrepentant employer. They knew that what they did to me would not be fair, but they carried it out anyway, thinking that I won’t be able to do anything about it. But with the help of Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, they were proved wrong.”

“The outcome of the case has had a profound and positive impact on my life. As a result, with the reasonable accommodation now in place at my workplace, I’m able to perform to my highest potential. My employer now acknowledges and supports my disabilities, and I feel genuinely supported, which has greatly enhanced my overall well-being and satisfaction.”

“I am incredibly grateful for the support I received from IHREC throughout my case. Their guidance was clear, and easy to understand, which made a significant difference during a challenging time.”

“I couldn’t fault my experience at all; Irish Sign Language interpreters were arranged for all the consultations, and I had full access to the information.”

00 *Raising complaints of unfair barriers placed by banking institutions is usually mentally draining & often doesn't go beyond a disgruntled email exchange so the case outcome gave me the belief and confidence to not sell myself (and my Deaf peers) short and to take a principled stance.”*

00 *It is seldom to come across exceptional service in a normal fee based solicitor/client scenario and this is what makes things even more remarkable at IHREC. You do amazing work, and you make a real difference to people’s lives. I wish you continued success in your work.”*

00 *I just want you to know how much you mean to me. I’ll never forget everything you’ve done for me – you’ve truly made a difference in my life.”*

00 *The team is professional and supportive. They provide all the necessary details and explain all scenarios, maintaining a professional attitude while ensuring that the client is aware of their rights and duties. The extraordinary support I received gave me back my confidence that we can secure our rights if we know how and when to request them.”*

00 *The outcome of this case has been the only occasion that is not upsetting to think about. But it is the thing that completely transformed the experience and left me with some sense of justice.”*

Own Name Proceedings

In 2023, for the first time since the establishment of the Commission, we used our powers under section 41 of the IHREC Act and brought proceedings before the High Court in our own name, seeking to address the State's failure to provide for the basic needs, including accommodation, of people recently arrived in Ireland and seeking asylum.

The proceedings continued this year before the High Court where we sought a declaration that the State's failure to provide for the basic needs of International Protection Applicants is in breach of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and/or the Constitution. We also sought an order requiring the Minister to provide material reception conditions, including accommodation, and/or sufficient financial assistance to meet the basic needs of applicants.

Case: The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission v. The Minister For Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland and The Attorney General

Court: High Court and Court of Appeal

Date of Commencement: 21 December 2023

Status of Case: Ongoing

Details: We brought proceedings before the High Court in our own name, seeking to address the State's failure to provide for the basic needs, including shelter, of people recently arrived in Ireland and seeking asylum.

Applicants for international protection ('IP applicants') are entitled to receive material reception conditions under EU and Irish law. Since 04 December 2023, not all IP applicants arriving in Ireland have been offered State accommodation.

The legal action brought seeks to compel the State to fulfil its legal obligations to provide for the basic needs of IP applicants, including the provision of shelter, food and access to basic hygiene facilities. It also seeks declarations from the Court that the failure to provide for the basic needs of IP applicants breaches the human rights of the people affected.

In bringing the application, we advised the High Court that we had written to the Minister indicating our intention to use this legal power for the first time since our establishment, because of the gravity of the situation and the nature of the destitution and risk faced by unaccommodated IP applicants.

Outcome: The case was heard on 29, 30 and 31 May by Mr Justice O'Donnell. The High Court delivered its judgment on 1 August.

The High Court declared that the State had failed in its duty to provide for the basic needs, including accommodation, for IP applicants who have recently arrived in Ireland and that this failure amounted to a breach of the applicants' right to human dignity.

On 15 November, the State filed a Notice of Appeal to the Court of Appeal against the judgment of the High Court.

The appeal is listed for hearing in the Court of Appeal on 06 and 07 March 2025.

The case is ongoing.

Acting as *amicus curiae*

We can apply to the Superior Courts for liberty to appear as *amicus curiae* ('friend of the court') in proceedings before that court that involve, or are concerned with, the human rights or equality rights of any person. It is up to the Court, at its discretion, to grant or refuse our involvement.

As *amicus curiae*, we do not represent any of the parties in the case - rather we assist the Court in respect of the human rights and/or equality issues relevant to the case.

At the start of the year, we were involved in two cases as *amicus curiae* in the Superior Courts, of which, one was completed during the course of the year.

During the year, we sought and were granted liberty to intervene as *amicus curiae* in two additional cases, of which one completed during the year.

At year end therefore, we were involved in two ongoing cases as *amicus curiae*.

Our *amicus curiae* submissions are published on our website once the hearing of the matter has completed.

For more recent developments in relation to these and other legal cases where we are exercising an *amicus curiae* role, please visit our website.

— Completed cases

Work completed on two *amicus* cases during the year.

Details of the completed cases are set out in the tables below:

Case: The People (at the suit of the DPP) vs Caolan Smyth and The People (at the suit of the DPP) vs Gary McAreavey

Court: Supreme Court

Commission Intervention: 29 March 2023

Hearing Date: 25 and 26 April 2023

Judgment: 17 June 2024

Details: The proceedings involve the rules on the admissibility of illegally obtained evidence and the right to a fair trial.

The Court of Appeal endorsed the reasoning of the Special Criminal Court, which held that any interference with a right to privacy must be balanced against the competing interest of the common good. In doing so, the Court of Appeal ruled

that the evidence should have been admitted. A question arose as to whether this approach was consistent with the exclusionary rule of evidence, previously established by the Supreme Court in *DPP v JC*.

Commission's Role: In our role as *amicus curiae*, we submitted that breaches of rights under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union must be treated in the same way as breaches of the Constitution for the purposes of admitting or excluding unlawfully obtained evidence. We also argued that, in the circumstances, the test set out in *JC* was the appropriate test for determining the admissibility of evidence to be applied.

Outcome: The Supreme held that that the Special Criminal Court did not err in admitting the traffic and location evidence.

Case: K.W. v. The Minister for Education & Ors

Court: High Court

Commission Intervention: 01 May 2024

Hearing Date: N/A, case settled

Judgment: N/A, case settled

Details: The case focuses on redress for survivors of historic child sexual abuse in schools, specifically on the requirement under the Scheme for survivors to have, on or before 1 July 2021, issued legal proceedings against the State seeking damages for sexual abuse in day schools before 1991 and 1992 in primary and post-primary schools respectively, following the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in *O'Keeffe v Ireland*.

Our predecessor, the Irish Human Rights Commission, intervened as a third party in the *O'Keeffe* case and submitted written observations to the European Court of Human Rights in 2011. Those submissions were referred to in the Court's judgment, which addressed the failure by the State to protect Ms *O'Keeffe* from sexual abuse in a national school in 1973 and to put in place a system of adequate and effective remedies for that abuse.

Since that time, we have engaged directly with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, with the State appointed Independent Assessor, with the UN Human Rights Council and with Oireachtas Members in relation to the human rights requirements for survivors to be able to access redress.

Commission's Role: In our role as *amicus curiae*, we submitted that these proceedings will have broad implications for the human rights of victims of historic abuse in accessing redress schemes.

Outcome: The case was settled in June 2024 with the State making a significant concession in the ongoing campaign by survivors of historical abuse in schools to access redress, by settling 10 High Court actions challenging the State's refusal to admit them to its most recent redress scheme.

Ongoing cases

At year end we were involved in **two** ongoing cases as *amicus curiae*. Details of ongoing matters are set out in the tables below:

Case: Digital Rights Ireland Limited v. The Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, The Commissioner for The Garda Síochána, Ireland and The Attorney General

Court: High Court

Commission Intervention: 01 July 2008

Status: Ongoing

Details: The proceedings raise issues regarding the scope of the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (the 'Charter') and the Court of Justice of the European Union's jurisprudence on privacy rights; the substantive application of the proportionality principle and the relationship between the Charter, the Constitution and the ECHR.

Outcome: The proceedings are ongoing.

Case: DOE (No.1) v The Director of Public Prosecutions [2024] IESCDET 102

DOE (No.2) v The Director of Public Prosecutions [2024] IESCDET 103

DOE (No.3) v The Director of Public Prosecutions [2024] IESCDET 104

Court: Supreme Court

Commission Intervention: 15 November 2024

Hearing Date: 03 and 04 December 2024

Status: Ongoing

Details: These cases are linked and deal with the loss of statutory protections for children who turn 18 prior to the completion of the criminal process.

The cases involve three individuals who are charged with criminal offences, alleged to have been committed when they were under 18 years. The allegations were reported to An Garda Síochána when the three individuals were still minors. Prior to being charged, these individuals turned 18 and as a consequence, they are no longer entitled to statutory protections provided for under the Children Act 2001, including anonymity. A High Court challenge taken by the individuals to prohibit the trial was unsuccessful. However, the High Court held that the loss of anonymity was potentially prejudicial and ordered reporting restrictions during the course of the trials of the individuals. Both the State and the accused individuals appealed this decision of the High Court to the Supreme Court. The Attorney General is also a Notice Party.

Outcome: Judgment in these cases has been reserved.

Strengthening legislation and addressing gaps

Preparing codes of practice

We have statutory powers under section 31(2) of the IHREC Act to prepare codes of practice in furtherance of one or more of the following aims:

- the protection of human rights;
- the elimination of discrimination;
- the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment; and
- the promotion of equality of opportunity in relation to those matters to which the Equal Status Acts apply.

The provisions of these Codes are admissible in evidence and may be taken into account in proceedings before a court, the Workplace Relations Commission or the Labour Court.

During the year, we:

- submitted a final draft Code of Practice on Discriminatory Advertising to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, following the completion of a statutory public consultation process;
- submitted a final draft Code of Practice on Public Sector Duty to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, following the completion of a statutory consultation process;

Separate to the above, in 2022 and 2023 respectively, we submitted a final draft Code of Practice on the Promotion of Family-Friendly Measures in the Workplace and a final draft Code of Practice on Reasonable Accommodation for Employees and Applicants with Disabilities to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which are still awaiting Ministerial approval.

Once signed by the Minister, the Codes of Practice are published on our website.

Equality Reviews and Equality Action Plans

Equality Reviews are carried out under section 32 of IHREC Act 2014. We hold the statutory power to invite public or private undertakings to carry out a review of equality of opportunity generally, or a particular aspect of discrimination under Ireland's anti-discrimination legislation, namely the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and/or the Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018.

We can also invite public or private bodies to prepare and implement Equality Action Plans to focus on specific areas emerging from equality reviews. We take a sectoral approach to achieve systemic improvements in advancing equality, having regard to the exercise of other powers and functions. This year we focused on rights relating to disability and housing and for the first time, we exercised our equality review power in the area of sport. An account of each of these Equality Reviews and Equality Action Plans is published on our website.

Equality Review: Equality of Opportunity in a Sporting Organisation

We invited Gymnastics Ireland to carry out an equality review, consisting of an audit of the level of equality of opportunity that exists in relation to Gymnastics Ireland's provision of services, under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018. The Equality Review involved an examination by Gymnastics Ireland of its practices, and the procedures that it has in place to promote equality of opportunity generally in the provision of services.

In particular, as part of the Equality Review, we invited Gymnastics Ireland to:

- Identify all relevant current practices and procedures that relate to promotion of equality of opportunity by Gymnastics Ireland in the provision of services;
- Assess the effectiveness of these practice and procedure in promoting equality of opportunity;
- Identify and assess the practices and procedures Gymnastics Ireland utilises to handle complaints raising an allegation of discrimination;
- Identify whether any issues of equality of opportunity arise; and
- Outline any recommendations and/or findings from the equality review.

In March, Gymnastics Ireland submitted the Equality Review. We sought further information, in particular about the actions taken by Gymnastics Ireland as a result of the Equality Review. In December, we decided that Gymnastics Ireland's response was satisfactory and that no further action is required.

As of December this work is ongoing.

Equality Review: State Examinations Commission – Provision of Reasonable Accommodation in Education settings

We invited the State Examinations Commission to carry out an Equality Review to address the issue of accessibility of State exams for candidates with a visual impairment, and specifically to address the provision of accessible modified papers, provision of additional time arrangements, and digital paper delivery and form.

In particular, as part of the Equality Review, we invited the State Examinations Commission to:

- Conduct an audit of the level of equality of opportunity that exists for candidates with a visual impairment on the issue of accessibility of State exams;
- Identify all relevant current practices, procedures or other factors (for example, strategies, plans and positive action initiatives) that relate to the issue of accessibility of State examinations for candidates with a visual impairment;
- Assess the effectiveness of such practices, procedures and other factors in relation to the accessibility of State examinations and the equality of opportunity of candidates with a visual impairment; and
- Outline any recommendations and/or findings from the Equality Review.

The State Examinations Commission accepted the invitation.

As of December this work is ongoing.

Equality Review: Access to employment for individuals with a visual impairment in the public service

We invited two private recruitment agencies, Sigmar Recruitment Consultants Limited and Staffline Recruitment Limited, to carry out an Equality Review to address the issue of accessibility of the recruitment process of public jobs for individuals with a visual impairment. Under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004, the Commission for Public Service Appointments can grant licenses to public bodies to enable them to undertake their own recruitment. Those public bodies can in turn seek the assistance of a private sector recruitment agency with the tasks associated with the recruitment processes.

As of December this work is ongoing.

Equality Action Plan: Provision of Traveller accommodation and services by local authorities

In 2022, on foot of Equality Reviews commenced in 2019, we invited seven of the Local Authorities to prepare and implement an Equality Action Plan on the provision of Traveller accommodation and services.

The selected Local Authorities were: South Dublin County Council, Limerick City and County Council, Tipperary County Council, Donegal County Council, Mayo County Council, Cork City Council and Wicklow County Council.

Our approach was informed by the responses of all the Local Authorities to the Equality Reviews and ensuring a geographical spread that reflects a national reach, amongst other considerations. We provided general guidance to the selected Local Authorities to assist with the preparation and implementation of the Equality Action Plans. We also stressed that consultation with members of the Traveller Community, the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, and local and national groups representing members of the Traveller Community, is an essential part of the implementation and success of these Equality Action Plans.

The seven Local Authorities submitted their final Equality Action Plans in July 2023 and we published the accounts of the Action Plans this year.

Accounts of the Equality Action Plans were published on our website in June.

Legislative observations

Central to our mandate is ensuring that our legislators uphold and strengthen human rights and equality in the State. We do this by making detailed observations and recommendations on the human rights and equality implications of relevant proposed legislation.

During the year we made the following legislative observations:

General Scheme of the Defamation (Amendment) Bill – Strategic Litigation against Public Participation provisions

We wrote to the Minister for Justice on provisions related to Strategic Litigation against Public Participation ('SLAPPs') in the General Scheme. We highlighted that it is essential for the protection of human rights defenders that robust measures on a legislative, regulatory, and policy basis are introduced at a national level to counter the threat of SLAPPs. We recommended that the State take a broad and ambitious approach in preparing a national legislative, regulatory, and policy framework to combat SLAPPs, and that national legislation on SLAPPs should incorporate the measures contained in the EU anti-SLAPP Directive.

General Scheme of the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) (Amendment) Bill

In our submission to the Minister for Justice, we highlighted our concerns that the intrusive nature of facial recognition technology requires strong rules and justifications, heightened protection in law, and robust safeguards to protect fundamental human rights. We also identified how the proposed legislation does not go far enough to ensure that these rights are protected. The introduction of facial recognition technologies for use by An Garda Síochána further compounds the human rights and equality concerns we have previously raised with regard to the range of powers proposed for An Garda Síochána across a number of pieces of legislation.

General Scheme of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

In our submission to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and the Clerk of the Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage, we highlighted how the proposals in relation to lawful and habitual residence eligibility criteria will likely lead to an increase in non-Irish nationals being excluded from the housing list. We raised concerns that the provisions in the Bill could have a discriminatory and disproportionate impact on ethnic minority communities, and on the most vulnerable groups in our society.

Maternity Protection (Amendment) and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2024

We wrote to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on provisions relating to Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in the General Scheme. We highlighted that the legislation must ensure that complainants enter into NDAs freely and fully informed of their rights. We reiterated our recommendation that provisions limiting the use of NDAs should be inserted into the Equality Acts, and that these provisions should apply to mediated settlements under the Equality Acts and the Workplace Relations Act 2015. We also noted that the provisions in the General Scheme are limited to employment equality complaints and recommended that provisions regulating the use of NDAs in relation to allegations of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation, should also apply in the settlement of cases under the Equal Status Act.

Follow-up on previous Legislative Observations

Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill 2023

We wrote to the Minister for Education regarding the Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill 2023. We recommended that the legislation be guided by human rights and equality standards; that there is direct engagement with survivors when developing rehabilitative reparations; and that a multifaceted approach to reparations is taken to reflect the different circumstances and needs of survivors. In particular, we recommended that the scheme should be accessible to the maximum number of survivors possible and should not prevent a person who has not received an award from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or a similar court award or settlement from benefitting from the supports provided under the legislation.

Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Act 2023

We wrote to the Minister for Justice and the Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice outlining substantive issues which remain outstanding in the enacted legislation, including Safeguards in the use of technology, Codes of Practice, Access and Retention of Data, Guarantee of a Fair Trial and Procedural Fairness, Transparency, Judicial Authorisation and Independent Oversight.

Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022

We wrote to the Minister for Justice after An Taoiseach Simon Harris stated that he wanted to “see hate crime legislation passed in the lifetime of this Government”, at a press briefing. He also said that the Minister for Justice would be bringing forward amendments to the legislation in the autumn term. In our correspondence, we sought clarification on the timeline of the legislation moving through the Oireachtas and emphasised the need for proper legislative scrutiny of this Bill, having regard to rule of law requirements.

Appearances before Oireachtas Committees

Throughout the year, we made appearances before two Oireachtas Committees.

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters

We addressed the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters, in our role as IMM, regarding the rights of people deprived of their liberty, with specific reference to Article 14 of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Our address called attention to the legislative gaps which expose disabled people to increased risks of Article 14 violations, and to the intersection of Article 14 with other UNCRPD articles, including Article 19 which concerns living independently and being included in the community.

Joint Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community

We appeared before the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community, raising wide-ranging concerns about anti-Traveller racism. We highlighted in particular, the abysmal failure of the State to provide adequate accommodation for Travellers, and called for a holistic, human rights and equality-based approach that provides culturally appropriate accommodation.

Monitoring, reporting and enforcement

Human rights and equality treaty monitoring

As the National Human Rights Institution, we monitor human rights in Ireland. We provide recommendations and inform treaty monitoring bodies' assessments of how Ireland is meeting its obligations under international human rights conventions.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

We made a submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to inform its fourth periodic review of Ireland. We made over 100 recommendations covering areas such as decent work, poverty, housing, health, education, taxation, climate, and civil society participation. In March, we attended the Committee's review of Ireland in Geneva. We engaged with the Committee and civil society during the review to highlight priority issues to be addressed by Ireland. We held a screening of the review in our office for civil society and media representatives. The Committee published their Concluding Observations in March, and their recommendations are closely aligned with our submission.

Revised European Social Charter

In March, the European Committee of Social Rights published its 'Findings of 2023' on Ireland assessing Ireland's follow-up actions in response to the ECSR's decisions on five collective complaints made against the State under European Social Charter. The findings directly referenced our June 2023 submission. The Committee found that Ireland had not adequately responded to its recommendations and continued to violate social rights in the areas of the provision of Traveller accommodation; current arrangements for industrial relations within An Garda Síochána; the compliance of Irish law, policy and practices on social housing with European standards; and trade union rights of defence force representative associations.

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

We wrote to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ahead of their eighth periodic visit to Ireland to examine the treatment of people deprived of their liberty. We made several recommendations related to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and set out our initial observations on nursing homes, accommodation for international protection applicants and children's residential care settings. In May, we met with the delegation of the Committee during their visit to Ireland to discuss key issues.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

We made a submission to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance ahead of their sixth monitoring visit to Ireland. Our submission focused on gaps in the protection against racism, discrimination and intolerance in Ireland. We also discussed reform of equality legislation, new equality strategies, data collection, online disinformation and misinformation, hate speech and hate-motivated violence, and equality and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ people, Travellers, Roma, and international and temporary protection applicants. In November, we met with a delegation of the Commission to discuss priority areas from our submission, including racial discrimination, and hate speech and violence.

Universal Periodic Review mid-term report

We submitted a mid-term parallel report to the UN Human Rights Council on the Universal Periodic Review. Ireland was reviewed as part of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in November 2021. Ireland received 260 recommendations from other UN States. Our submission focused on responding to key recommendations raised during the Review which remain unaddressed in Ireland. Our recommendations covered resourcing of IHREC, ratification of UN treaties, business and human rights, tax policies, climate, immigration, housing, and health.

Engagement in international networks

We have a mandate to give guidance to, and encourage, public bodies in developing policies and good practice in relation to human rights and equality.

We are a member of the:

- European Network of National Human Rights Institutions ('ENNRI');
- European Network of Equality Bodies ('Equinet'); and
- Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions ('GANHRI')
- Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ('FRA').

Throughout the year, we continued to contribute to, and benefit from active engagement in these networks.

ENNHRI

ENNHRI represents 50 national human rights institutions across Council of Europe Member States.

We participated in the ongoing work of ENNHRI's:

- Legal Working Group;
- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Working Group;
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Working Group; and
- Communications Working Group;
- Artificial Intelligence Working Group;
- Climate Crisis and Human Rights;
- Business and Human Rights Working Group;
- Rule of Law Reporting.

Through these working groups we:

- contributed to ENNHRI's statement on the recognition of the right to a healthy environment, urging the Council of Europe Member States to adopt a binding instrument on the right to a healthy environment.
- helped to develop awareness raising materials on NHRI standards.
- presented best practices in engaging with the State on implementing the EU Artificial Intelligence Act and inputted on a survey about the nomination of National Human Rights Institutions as Article 77 bodies.
- Exchanged knowledge with peers on the establishment of the UNCRPD Independent Monitoring Mechanism role.

We also engaged in discussion and analysis on a range of issues including:

- young people's access to social rights and in particular housing, employment and protection against poverty.
- strengthening the role of National Human Rights Institutions as protection mechanisms for human rights defenders.
- how the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive will be transposed in a way that respects business and human rights principles.

— Rule of Law Reporting

We submitted a response to ENNHRI's consultation for its Rule of Law Report, which was published in May. Our submission for the country chapter on Ireland identified a number of rule of law concerns across a range of thematic areas including:

1. NHRIs establishment, independence and effectiveness.
2. Checks and balances.
3. Impact of securitisation on human rights and the rule of law.
4. Implementation of European Courts' judgments.
5. Other persisting challenges for the rule of law, including structural human rights issues.

We directed a number of recommendations to the State on actions and measures to improve the rule of law environment in Ireland. The Report will inform the preparations of the European Commission's Rule of Law in the European Union Report.

Equinet

Equinet Europe, the network of national equality bodies, brings together 49 equality bodies from 36 European countries.

During the year, we participated in the ongoing work of Equinet's:

- Communications Strategies and Practices Working Group;
- Disability Cluster;
- Research and Data Collection Working Group;
- Policy Formation Working Group;
- Equality Law Working Group; and
- Artificial Intelligence Working Group

Through these working groups we:

- provided a two-day training session on *amicus curiae* and third party interventions to Equinet representatives and over 30 lawyers from other National Equality Bodies all over Europe.
- investigated ways to strengthen cooperation between the European Commission and Equality Bodies to identifying issues, practices and strategies that address discrimination and intolerance against Muslims.



Participants in amicus curiae and third party intervention training session provided to Equinet Equality Law Working Group

- participated in training on using situation testing.
- informed research by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the relationship between gender equality, violence against women, and freedom of religion or belief.
- explored strategies for safeguarding equality in the implementation of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act.

— EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies

We also engaged with Equinet in relation to their work on the EU Directives for Equality Bodies. The new EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies entered into force on 19 June 2024 and must now be transposed into Irish law by 19 June 2026. The Directives are the first legally binding international instruments providing detailed standards for equality bodies and will significantly strengthen the enforcement of EU equal treatment laws by improving the effectiveness of equality bodies and guaranteeing their independence. We attended meetings of the Standards Project in May and September, and workshops on Independence and Litigation powers in June and December respectively.

GANHRI

We are a member of GANHRI, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, which brings together over 115 NHRIs from all regions of the globe and provides leadership and support in the promotion and protection of human rights.

We responded to a GANHRI survey on the role of National Human Rights Institutions in the establishment and strengthening of national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up to recommendations from UN treaty

body mechanisms. Our response noted the need for permanent, governmental structures to ensure that UN Concluding Observations are progressed in between reporting cycles.

In September, GANHRI requested we engage in national advocacy around seeking the State's support for two draft resolutions related to National Human Rights Institutions that were being considered at the 57th Session of the Human Rights Council. One resolution was focused on National Human Rights Institutions and the rights of disabled people. The other resolution was focused on National Human Rights Institutions and national monitoring, implementation, review and follow-up mechanisms. We submitted correspondence to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to the Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations (Geneva) calling for the Irish State to support and co-sponsor the respective resolutions.

European Engagement

In line with section 17 of the IHREC Act, we appoint, from amongst the membership of the Commission, a person to be a member of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ('FRA').

Jim Clarken is the current Commission appointee. He was re-elected Chairperson of the FRA Management Board in December 2024. Dr. Salome Mbugua is the alternate appointee.

EU Equality Data Subgroup

The Subgroup on Equality Data, which is facilitated by the Fundamental Rights Agency helps Member States to improve the collection and use of equality data. We were the co-ordinator and primary drafter on the Guidance Note on the National Implementation of Equality Data Guidelines, which included good practice examples from Ireland and seven other Member States, Eurostat and the Fundamental Rights Agency. We were involved in two exchange visits: travelling to Belgium to present at an equality data conference organised by the Unia equality body and hold knowledge exchange meetings; and hosting the Italian National Statistics Authority who attended the Central Statistics Organisation's annual Administrative Data Seminar and arranging knowledge exchange meetings with Pavee Point and Pobal.

European Semester

We attended and contributed to the 2024 Virtual 'Fact-Finding' Meeting on the European Semester between representatives from the European Commission and social stakeholders in Ireland. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the European Commission's 2024 Country Report and Country Specific Recommendations for Ireland. The meeting focused on the implementation of the

Recovery and Resilience Plan, and stakeholders' views on outstanding challenges in Ireland's social, green, and economic policies.

European Commission Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

We contributed to the work of the European Commission Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which prepared two Opinions on Gender and Health, and on the new Gender Equality Strategy.

Gender Equality Data Knowledge Exchange with Ukraine

We presented our work on gender equality data during a knowledge exchange visit to Ireland organised by UN Women. The Ukrainian delegation included UN Women Ukraine and the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman).



Members of UN Women Ukraine and Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights meet with IHREC staff during a knowledge exchange visit to Ireland

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

All public bodies in Ireland are required to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.

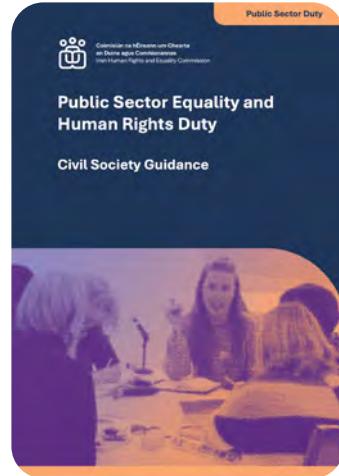
This Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the 'Duty') has been part of Irish law since 2014 and is set out in Section 42 of the IHREC Act.

Supporting the effective implementation of the Public Sector Duty

Throughout the year, we continued to innovate and to foster a heightened understanding and acceptance by Government Departments and public sector bodies of their responsibilities with regard to the Duty. Our work to support an understanding of, and compliance with the Duty is centred around providing guidance, education and training to public bodies.

Providing guidance to support effective implementation of the Duty

We developed revised guidance to support public bodies to understand and comply with their statutory obligations under Section 42 of the IHREC Act 2014. The revised guidance is informed by our engagement and training with public bodies over the last number of years and incorporates their feedback. The guidance aligns with the messaging of the forthcoming Code of Practice. It provides public bodies with information on the Duty and suggest practical steps including details on how and when to implement an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment and case studies to demonstrate the recommended step. This practical guidance supports organisations to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and protect human rights for service users, potential service users, staff and potential staff and how a public body can ensure and demonstrate compliance with the Duty.



Education and Training on the Public Sector Duty

We updated the Public Sector Duty eLearning module following an evaluation of feedback received from learners. To date 75% of all public bodies have engaged with the eLearning module. Arising from the targeted programme of work with the local government sector all 31 local authorities engaged with the eLearning during the year with a total of 1,500 local authority staff completing the module. The module can be accessed on www.ihrec.ie/elearning

Engaging with the Public Sector

Using a strategic approach to delivering of training, workshops and guidance support, we continued to engage with a wide range of public bodies across the public service, including the Office of the Attorney General, National Council for Special Education, [Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Sectoral support programme – Local government

In October we completed our targeted Public Sector Equality and Human Rights training programme with the local government sector. This programme focused on ensuring all local authority corporate plans 2024-2029 and all Local Economic and Community Plans 2022-2027 comply with the core obligations of the Duty. Throughout this two-year project we provided training to over 800 public servants and elected representatives in all local authorities across the country, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Department of Rural and Community Development, Local Government Management Agency and the National Oversight and Audit Commission. We also delivered training to 200 elected members of local authorities across all local authority areas so they could support compliance with the Duty when adopting local authority corporate plans.

Through this work:

95% of Local Economic and Community Plans 2022-2027 have now demonstrated evidence of having regard the obligations of the Duty, an increase of 85% on the previous LECP cycle.

75% of Local Authority Corporate Plans 2024-2029 that have been published are compliant with the core requirements of the Duty, an increase of 55% on the previous corporate planning cycle.

The Public Sector Duty Protecting the Right to Vote

Informed by discussions with members of the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) we prepared a report documenting the barriers experienced by disabled voters during the referendums held in March. The report highlighted positive changes that could be implemented by local authorities which would address some of the barriers highlighted in our report, in advance of the Local and European elections in June.

Monitoring, reporting and enforcement

We continued to monitor compliance with Public Sector Duty reporting obligations. To be compliant with Section 42(2) of the Act, the assessment of issues, plans to address them and annual reporting on progress must be made publicly available. We carried out research into whether the Strategic Plans/Corporate plans of 288 public bodies contained an assessment of the human rights and equality issues pertinent to each organisations function, along with a plan to address those issues. We carried out the same process to ascertain whether public bodies had reported on progress in meeting addressing the issues identified in their Annual Reports. Through our compliance monitoring system, we have observed increased

compliance levels, year on year, with the publishing requirements of the Public Sector Duty on a sectorial basis. 58 (20%) of the 288 public bodies met their publishing requirements in full. This was an increase of 20 (52%) from last year. A further 52 (18%) had partially met the publishing requirements. This was up from 26 in 2023, which is an 100% increase – see Appendix nine for a comprehensive breakdown of our findings.

European Structural Investment Funds 2021-2027

We continued to work to ensure adherence to the enabling conditions relating to equality and human rights and the horizontal principle on equality and non-discrimination in the current European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programme. Over the year, we worked with a variety of Managing Authorities to support the progression of equality and human rights in the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of current programmes, supported by the guidance on Equality and Human Rights in EU Funds 2021-2027. We delivered training to the Programme Monitoring Committees of the ESIF. We continued to work closely with our colleagues in other EU countries during 2024 to ensure that best practice continues to be applied to our work in this area.

Developing policies and programmes

Policy statements and submissions

Making recommendations to Government, the Oireachtas and policy makers to uphold and strengthen human rights and equality in the State is central to our mandate. During the year we made the following policy statements and submissions.

Evaluation of the State's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

We submitted correspondence to the Department of An Taoiseach on the proposed evaluation of the State's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The correspondence called for the State to carry out an independent, thorough, transparent and rights-based evaluation into the pandemic response, including examining the impact of emergency measures on the rights of people in order to plan for future crises. We recommended that the design, functioning and outcomes of the independent evaluation should be underpinned by relevant Constitutional, European, and international human rights and equality standards.

Green Paper on Disability Reform – A Public Consultation to Reform Disability Payments in Ireland

In our role as IMM, we provided a submission to the Department of Social Protection's consultation on the Green Paper on the reform of disability payments. Our submission drew attention to disabled people's access to social security, decent work, and disabled people's experience of poverty. We recommended that policy changes to disability payments are designed with the active participation of disabled people and their representative organisations at all stages of development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We called for the consultation and any resulting reform to disability payments to be underpinned by the standards of the UNCRPD and ICESCR.

National equality strategies

We provided the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth with a suite of documents on our views and recommendations to inform the development of new equality strategies related to disabled people, LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, Traveller and Roma, women and girls. We also provided the Department with a collation of relevant United Nations and Council of Europe monitoring bodies' recommendations to Ireland related to these groups.

Observations on the draft National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028 and draft Action Plan 2024–2028

We submitted observations on a draft of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028 and draft Action Plan 2024–2028 to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Our observations focused on

the development, implementation and monitoring of equality strategies. We called for the Department to ensure the meaningful participation of Traveller and Roma civil society organisations in the new Strategy.

Observations on the draft second National Plan on Business and Human Rights

We submitted observations to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Foreign Affairs on a draft second National Plan on Business and Human Rights. The observations focus on including the incorporation of the Public Sector Duty in the Plan and in public procurement processes, alignment of the Plan with the response to trafficking, consideration of the Island of Ireland dimension, alignment of the Plan with UN Concluding Observations, broad transposition of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, and effective access to remedy.

Key equality and human rights recommendations for the next Government

To inform the preparation of election manifestos by political parties, we published a document highlighting our recommendations in some of the key policy areas that have significant human rights and equality implications. Our recommendations covered areas including Public Sector Duty; disability; care; redress; housing; policing; domestic, sexual and gender-based violence; climate; and Island of Ireland work.

Public Consultation on National Implementation of EU Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (AI Act)

We made a submission to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's public consultation on the national implementation of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act. The submission focused on the role and powers of Article 77 bodies that have a responsibility to protect fundamental rights, under the EU AI Act. We called for IHREC to be designated as an Article 77 body under the AI Act. We called for IHREC to be adequately resourced to undertake this function and for clarity on how Article 77 bodies, including IHREC, will cooperate and coordinate with each other and with market surveillance authorities. Our submission was informed by engagement with ENNHRI and Equinet members on their experiences of implementing the AI Act in their States.

Policy Brief on Access to Justice: Implementation of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Using evidence from our research report; Access to Justice: A Baseline Study of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we developed an accompanying policy brief. We use the findings from the research report to make recommendations to address barriers that disabled people face in accessing justice.

Policy Statement on Socio-Economic Status as a ground of discrimination under the Equality Acts

In this Policy Statement, we called on the State to amend Irish equality law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of socio-economic status. While Ireland is already obliged under various international treaties to provide protection against discrimination on grounds related to socio-economic status, we called for an update to our laws to make it a stand-alone ground, and to ensure greater protection for those with a disadvantaged socio-economic status.

Research

Our research aims to provide evidence for human rights and equality monitoring and to inform development of policy in the area of human rights and equality.

ESRI Research Programme

Our joint Research Programme on Human Rights and Equality with the Economic and Social Research Institute was established in 2022. The aim of the Research Programme is to create, improve and enhance knowledge on human rights and equality, in order to provide evidence for equality and human rights monitoring and for the development of policy in this area, with a specific focus on our Strategic Priority of Economic Equality. We published a report on The Equality Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Irish Labour Market. Findings showed that employment rates rose for almost all groups analysed post-pandemic, while unemployment and labour market inactivity generally fell.

Access to Justice: Implementation of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In our role as Independent Monitoring Mechanism, we commissioned research to prepare a baseline analysis of the implementation of UNCRPD Article 13 Access to Justice. The report offered recommendations in a range of areas, including addressing unmet legal needs; providing access to justice for people deprived of their liberty; accessibility of the justice system; legislative and policy frameworks reform; knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes of people working in the justice

sector; and access to data and information. We also produced an accompanying policy brief making recommendations to address the key findings of the report.

Contributions to Research Working and Advisory Groups

We provided expert input and advice as invited members of research working groups. We are members of the National Disability Authority's Research Advisory Group for their Wards of Court Research Project, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's Policy Advisory Group for the Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal Study.

Data

Consistent, clear data collection is essential to ensure policies are non-discriminatory and are enabling equal participation in Irish life. We are committed to strengthening the foundation of equality data. Throughout the year, we engaged in gathering poll data and contributed to a number of data-focused groups.

Annual poll

Our annual poll is a cross-sectional and representative survey repeated annually. It is an important benchmark in measuring people's understanding and knowledge of their rights, their levels of support for the elimination of human rights abuses and discrimination, and if they think that the State's efforts in combatting these abuses are effective. Over 90% of respondents said that human rights are important for creating a fairer society in Ireland.

Other polls

We ran a poll on public attitudes towards the importance of ensuring the equivalence of rights on the Island of Ireland. 73% of respondents agreed on the importance of there being equivalent equality and human rights protections between Northern Ireland and Ireland. The poll highlighted strong support for action, finding two in three (67%) agree (35%) or strongly agree (32%) that more needs to be done to harmonise equality and rights protections across the Island of Ireland.

Enhancing the standards of anti-trafficking response in Ireland

Our role as Ireland's Independent National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings was established by Statutory Instrument No. 432 of 2020 – European Union (Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking) (National Rapporteur) Regulations 2020, with a view to assessing trends, measuring results, gathering data and reporting.

Our purpose as Rapporteur is to provide effective, independent and meaningful oversight of the State's actions to combat human trafficking and protect victims by highlighting the strengths, gaps, and identifying trends.

Publication and launch of the third evaluation report

We launched our Third Evaluation Report on the State's efforts to tackle and address human trafficking in Ireland, covering the period of 2023. The Report provided an evaluation of the implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, including consideration of the amendments to the Directive, data and analysis, along with thematic research on emerging and under-researched matters with chapters on: Trafficking for Criminal Activity, Exploitation of Surrogacy, and The Role of Business and Migrant Employment Regulation in Preventing Trafficking. The launch was a hybrid event. Speakers included survivors, national and international experts.



Launch of Third
Evaluation
Report

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024

We welcomed the publication of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024 which will place, on a statutory footing, the new National Referral Mechanism ('NRM') for the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking, which is a first of its kind in Europe. We await the commencement of Part 3 of the Act which marks an important and significant step towards the introduction of a victim-centred NRM in law, including a multidisciplinary

approach and cooperation between State bodies and independent expert organisations. We welcomed important improvements in the final law, but also highlighted remaining areas of concern. These include the need for: detailed provision of assistance and supports in law; inclusion and provision of immigration permits; equity of treatment of victims; specific procedures for child victims of trafficking; equal protections for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation as for other sexual offences; an explicit statement that assistance and supports are not conditional on cooperation with criminal investigations and proceedings; and statutory measures for protection against prosecution for victims.

NRM Operational Guidelines

We engaged substantively with the Department of Justice about the development of the draft Operational Guidelines which will accompany the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024 and will act as a roadmap for the new NRM. While we have noted concern that such important issues will be left to soft policy rather than legislation, these Guidelines will now be extremely important to address the remaining gaps in the law, and to support a robust and efficient response to trafficking and a well-functioning NRM.

Human trafficking policy and submissions

In our role as Rapporteur, we provided trafficking-specific analysis and recommendations in areas that impact on victims of trafficking and in the overall response to combat trafficking. Examples include our contributions to the European Commission's 5th Progress Report on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union, to the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls to the Human Rights Council on 'Prostitution and violence against women and girls', and our submission of a questionnaire to the US State Department to inform their Trafficking in Persons Report.

We provided a submission to Coimisiún na Meán on 'Developing Ireland's first binding Online Safety Code for Video-Sharing Platform Services'. Correspondence was issued to the Minister for State for Trade Promotion, Digital & Company Regulation on the significant potential of the then proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive to bolster the anti-trafficking response, and to the Minister for Health seeking to engage on the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024 when it was a Bill.

Survivor consultation

The involvement of survivors is a cornerstone to our work, and we continued to engage with survivors through a series of survivor consultations. These consultations helped shape and inform both the Third National Evaluation Report and its launch, as well as the work of the Rapporteur more broadly.

Human trafficking forums and groups

We actively participate in the Human Trafficking Stakeholder's Forum provided for under the Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023 – 2027 ('NAP'). This was established by the Department of Justice and comprises of community and voluntary sector and other expert stakeholders.

We joined and attended the Human Trafficking Labour Exploitation Subgroup which is also provided for under the NAP. This multi-disciplinary group was established by the Department of Justice in 2024 to examine what more can be done to identify victims of trafficking for labour exploitation.

We attended the 'Health and Social Care Education and Trafficking Forum' to offer our expertise and assistance in educating future professionals in human trafficking, and to improve identification and prevention efforts.

We attended Tusla's 'Working Group to examine and progress Tusla's commitments under the Second and Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland'. The Working Group is multi-disciplinary and includes both State Agencies and Civil Society Organisations.

We engaged with Tusla and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the treatment of age-disputed minors in the international protection process to raise concerns related to human trafficking.

EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms, and EU Civil Society Platform on Human Trafficking

Throughout the year, along with the Department of Justice (National Trafficking Coordinator), we attended meetings of the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms and the Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings. These meetings focused on various aspects of addressing trafficking in human beings, including international cooperation and the amended EU Anti-Trafficking Directive.

Consultations, collaborations and knowledge exchange

We held a number of invaluable consultations and roundtables with civil society organisations (CSOs) during the year.

We participated in a Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Division Round Table which focussed on the follow-up to GRETA's 3rd Evaluation Report and the Committee of the Parties' recommendation concerning the implementation on the Council of Europe Convention on Action in Trafficking in Human Beings by Ireland.

Attendees included the Department of Justice as National Coordinator, various State Agencies and Departments that play a role in combating human trafficking, and relevant expert CSOs. Ireland will formally report to GRETA in 2025.

We attended the OSCE 24th High-Level Alliance against Trafficking in Persons: 'Beyond Awareness-Raising: Reshaping Human Trafficking Prevention' in Vienna.

We attended an online a meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms which was co-organised by the Council of Europe and the OSCE. This meeting served as an expert platform to identify joint actions in addressing the current human trafficking-related challenges in the OSCE region and promote the implementation of relevant OSCE commitments and recommendations. We also attended an online digital exchange of expertise among National Rapporteurs or Equivalent Mechanisms presenting on our evaluation and reporting methods.

We met with the Finnish Independent Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings to share challenges and learning.

We met with the Special Representative for International Labour Affairs of the US State Department to discuss our role as National Rapporteur and the current work of the team on trafficking for labour exploitation.

We provided an insight into our role, experiences, and activities as a well-established independent National Rapporteur to a Danish Institute for Human Rights study being conducted as part of efforts against human trafficking in Denmark.

The Head of Team delivered a lecture on human trafficking in Maynooth University as part of the Commission's commitment to raise awareness of and increase engagement with younger audiences on human trafficking.

We provided civil society stakeholders with weekly press reviews containing relevant news/articles/reports from third parties in relation to Ireland, the UK and the world, on trafficking in human beings for all forms of exploitation, forced labour, and related matters.

Establishing the UNCRPD Independent Monitoring Mechanism

We are Ireland's 'Independent Monitoring Mechanism' ('IMM') for the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities ('UNCRPD'), as provided for under Article 33 CRPD. In our role as the IMM, we undertake work to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention. To fulfil our role, we act in the spirit and demonstrable practice of inclusion and participation, as required by the UNCRPD.

Establishing our mandate

We established a new dedicated UNCRPD team to develop the processes and technical knowledge required to fulfil our mandate as the IMM.

After extensive engagement with stakeholders, including expert advice from our Disability Advisory Committee and submissions provided during our strategic planning period, we adopted three priority thematic areas for the IMM.

These are:

1. The right to independent living;
2. Access to justice for disabled people; and
3. The rights of people who are deprived of liberty, including the right to legal capacity and equal recognition before the law.

National engagement

We engaged with Disabled Persons Organisations/Disabled Persons Representative Organisations (DPOs/DPROs), public bodies, government departments and non-governmental bodies domestically to establish working relationships and operational practices required to fulfil our mandate. For example, we engaged with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the National Disability Authority, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the National Advocacy Service regarding areas of common interest. We engaged with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as the focal point for UNCRPD implementation and sought to bring visibility to our role.

International engagement

Throughout the year, we also engaged extensively with peer NHRIs and IMMs across the EU and globally, to collate examples of best practices, learn from lessons learned and build a knowledge base to inform the establishment of the IMM.

At our request, a dedicated ENNHRI CRPD working group meeting was convened to share knowledge and experience about the establishment of the UNCRPD

Independent Monitoring Mechanism. ENNHRI colleagues shared valuable insight into processes including organisational set-up and institutional capacity strengthening, statistic and data collection, and participation with disabled people and their representative organisations.

We attended a GANHRI event on the side-lines of the 57th Human Rights Council Session that was focused on ‘Building Inclusive Societies and the roles of NHRIS in Promoting, Protecting and monitoring the rights of Person with disabilities.’ We met bilaterally with peers at the Swedish Institute for Human Rights, Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, New Zealand Human Rights Commission, Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Disability Commissioner for Malta and the South African Human Rights Commission, all holders of the IMM mandate, to exchange knowledge and experience regarding systems for monitoring, promoting and protecting the UNCRPD.

Policies and consultations

We provided UNCRPD-specific analysis and recommendations on a range of policies and consultations.

The right of disabled people to participate in decision-making

We provided a submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Disability Matters regarding the rights of disabled people, and their representative organisations, to participate in developing, implementing and monitoring policy that affects them, with specific reference to Article 4 of the UNCRPD. Our submission highlighted that the active engagement with disabled people is a prerequisite for a human-rights based model of disability, highlighting the many barriers they nevertheless encounter and providing tangible recommendations for the realisation of their right to participate.

Political participation

We engaged with the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Planning, through written correspondence, regarding the rights of disabled people to express their right to political participation, and in particular highlighting the requirement to ensure accessible voting in advance of the local, national and European elections.

In our role as the IMM, we attended several domestic policy-related events including the launch of Law Reform Commission report on a regulatory framework for adult safeguarding in Ireland and ‘Disability Policy in Focus’, and a knowledge sharing symposia for improved policymaking and outcomes convened by the Department of Public Expenditure NDP Delivery and Reform.

— National Disability Strategy

We participated in consultation events and engaged in several bilateral meetings with officials at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth regarding the successor to the National Disability Strategy. We provided a written submission to inform the development of the strategy and engaged in several discussions during which we shared our views and analysis regarding the strategy development process, monitoring framework and content.

— Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD

We engaged with the Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in response to the decision by the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD, through a written correspondence, urging immediate implementation of the UNCRPD including by enacting much needed legislative reform.

Research

Access to Justice: Implementation of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we launched our baseline research on Access to Justice for disabled people. The event was attended by stakeholders representing CSOs, public bodies and self-advocates. Keynote speakers included Professor Anna Lawson, University of Leeds and a panel discussion chaired by Justice John MacMenamin included representatives from the Department of Justice, civil society, academic and the legal profession.

Interviews with disabled people formed a core part of developing the evidence base for this research. The report offered recommendations in a range of areas, including addressing unmet legal needs; providing access to justice for people deprived of their liberty; accessibility of the justice system; legislative and policy frameworks reform; knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes of people working in the justice sector; and access to data and information.



Launch of Access to Justice Report

Equality and human rights on the island of Ireland

Article 2 of the Windsor Framework

Under Article 2 of the Windsor Framework (formerly the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol to the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement), the UK Government has committed to ensuring that certain equality and human rights protections in Northern Ireland will continue to be upheld after Brexit.

We continued working with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland ('ECNI') and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission ('NIHRC') to provide oversight of, and reporting on, rights and equalities issues within the scope of the Article 2 commitment that have an island of Ireland dimension.

Four Jurisdictions

We meet annually with our counterparts in the three jurisdictions of the UK; the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Scottish Human Rights Commission, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This meeting acts as a forum for the Commissions to collaborate and exchange information on best practice regarding equality and human rights issues.

Joint Committee

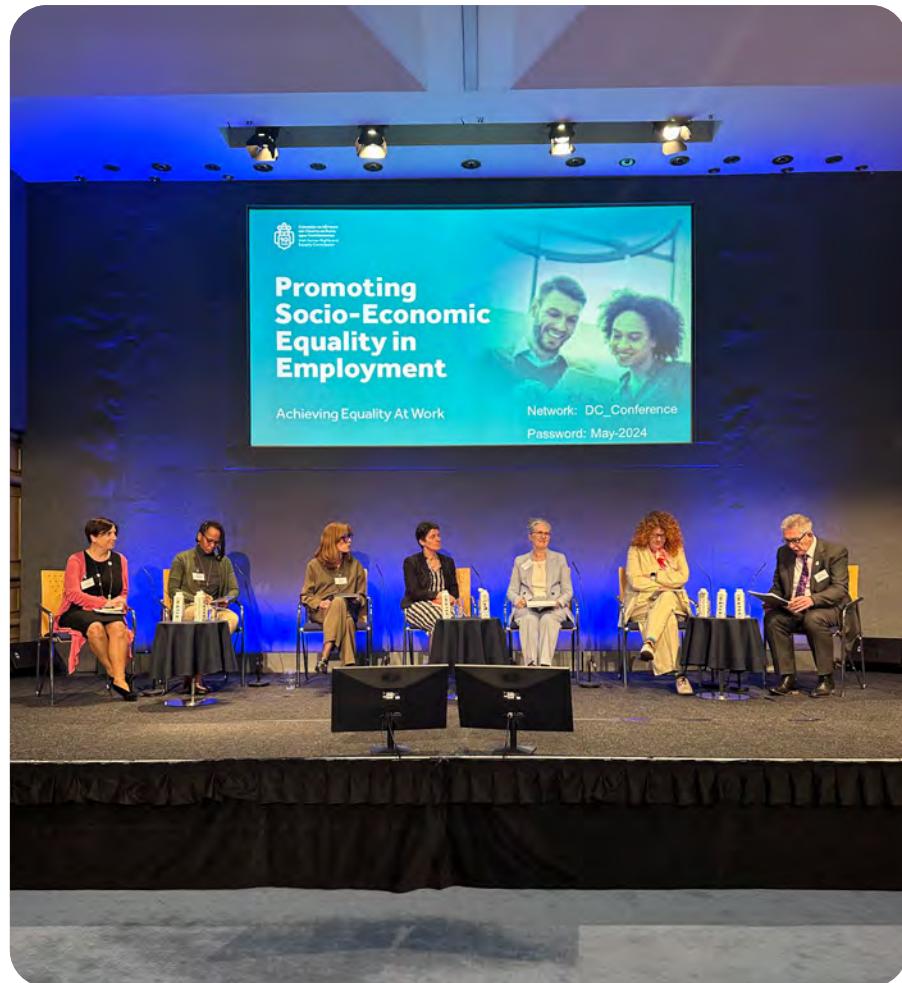
Our Joint Committee with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission convened once during the year to consider human rights issues on the island of Ireland, in accordance with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

Engagement and communication

Achieving Equality at Work – Promoting Social Equality in Employment

We held a conference on 'Achieving Equality At Work: Promoting Social Equality in Employment'. It was the fourth in a series of conferences on equality at work organised through the Worker and Employer Advisory Committee (WEAC) with the support of Ibec and ICTU.

More than 50 speakers provided contributions in plenary and in parallel panel discussions, with a strong emphasis on the importance of a ground of protection on socio-economic status being included in the equality legislation.



Photos from
the 'Promoting
Social Equality
in Employment'
conference



Event on the International Decade for People of African Descent

In November, we held an event to mark the International Decade for People of African Descent in Ireland. The event examined the implementation of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's 2019 recommendations to the Irish State related to people of African descent in the thematic areas of employment, education, racial profiling, hate crime, and participation in political and public life. Roundtable discussions took place on the measures and actions needed to address the structural and institutional arrangements, laws, practices and policies, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against People of African descent in Ireland.

Using our public space to support civil society

A large diversity of civil society organisations promoting human rights and equality used our event space for a variety of activities including conferences, seminars, discussions, and training. We had an increase in use of the space by civil society organisations launching research and other reports funded under our grants scheme. Whenever possible, the Chief Commissioner spoke at these events. Close to fifty events took place throughout the year.

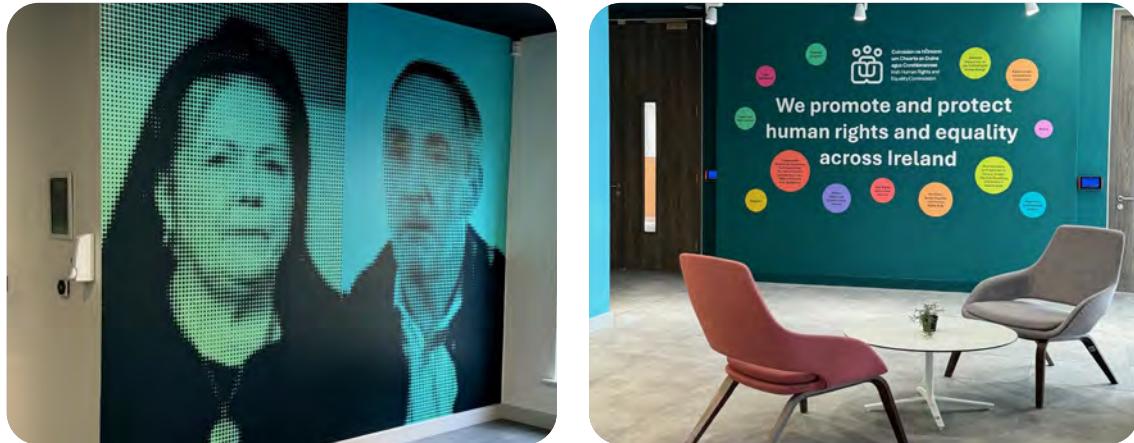
All who use the space have benefited from being able to choose to organise hybrid events as an option.

Revamped Event Space and Quiet Room

As part of refreshing our branding, and to coincide with our IHREC at 10 celebrations, we revamped our Event Space and Quiet Room.

We used our new brand colours to bring warmth and feeling to both spaces, and incorporated imagery of six people who participated in our campaign work over the last few years to represent the work that we do.

We also installed a new fully accessible, height adjustable podium, with space for a wheelchair user underneath. As far as we are aware, this is the only podium of its kind in Ireland, enabling us to lead by example with the accessibility of our space.



Revamped Event Space and Quiet Room at IHREC

Grant Scheme to support civil society and rights holders

€350,000 was made available to support projects to be carried out by civil society organisations nationwide. The themes were informed by our strategic priorities and supported projects under three strands:

- **Strand A:** Advancing Economic Equality
- **Strand B:** Promoting Awareness of Rights and Access to Justice
- **Strand C:** Promoting Climate Justice, Environmental Justice and a Just Transition

Projects were awarded for general grants up to €20,000 and for smaller grants up to €6,000. The scheme was open to civil society organisations working to promote human rights and equality, trade unions, rights-holder groups, representing communities of interest protected under the nine equality grounds and those addressing poverty and social exclusion including people seeking international protection and migrant communities.

Strand A: Advancing Economic Equality

Organisation: ADT Ireland – ADT Fourth World

Project Title: A fairer future - Steps towards Social Inclusion and Socio-economic Equality

Summary: The aim of this project is to promote awareness of social inclusion and socio-economic equality, by identifying key inclusion supporting actions needed to reduce socioeconomic discrimination and support a new socio- economic status ground in the equality legislation. The project will produce a film and a toolkit that will be disseminated nationally and internationally.

Organisation: Outhouse LGBT+ Centre

Project Title: Pride and Poverty: A Study of Economic Challenges in the LGBTQ+ Community

Summary: The aim of this project is to produce qualitative research on the experience of poverty among LGBTQ+ individuals and the economic hardship and discrimination that they experience. This project aims at promoting awareness among policymakers, stakeholders, and the public about the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity and economic inequality. Ultimately, it will empower LGBTQ+ individuals by amplifying their voices and experiences and promoting self-advocacy to combat poverty and discrimination.

Organisation: Hygiene Hub CLG

Project Title: Exploring the forced economic choices of hygiene poverty.

Summary: The aim of this project is to run a campaign, informed by evidence-based research, to raise awareness of hygiene poverty, highlighting that a lack of access to essential hygiene items and other basic necessities is related to income inadequacy, resulting in an inadequate standard of living. Affected rights-holders and communities will be involved in shaping the campaign and production of a video to highlight the reality of the issue. The goal is to engage stakeholders, promote a living wage, influence policy on social welfare adequacy; leading to greater economic equality for those affected.

Organisation: Amal Women Ireland

Project Title: Equal employment Opportunities and Accessibility to Muslim Women

Summary: The aim of this project is to produce evidence based and informed research on the technical, practical, cultural, and legal barriers faced by Muslim women when accessing employment that match their qualifications and career aspirations in Ireland. By producing such data, the project will increase evidence to advocate for human rights and equality-based legislation, policies, strategies, practices that address these barriers.

Organisation: ActionAid Ireland

Project Title: The dream of a home in Ireland: The denial of the right to housing for lone parent asylum seekers in Ireland

Summary: The aim of this project is to produce participatory research with rights holders highlighting gaps in policy and the systemic barriers lone migrant parents face with respect to accessing housing. As very little research has looked at the specific challenges and policy gaps for those who are lone parents living in direct provision, trying to transition to private rental accommodation this study will produce important data that will be used to influence policy change.

Organisation: Irish Refugee Council

Project Title: Transition from Direct Provision

Summary: The aim of this project is to conduct qualitative research into the lived experience of people that have been through the international protection system, received status, and now are living with full housing rights. It will examine key factors that impact transition from direct provision and the experience of people who left including long-term homelessness. The research aims to make tangible, practical and realistic policy recommendations and raise awareness of the difficulties faced by those affected in accessing housing and integrating.

Strand B: Promoting Awareness of Rights and Access to Justice

Organisation: Community Action Network

Project Title: Making the Collective Complaint Protocol Work

Summary: The aim of this project is to facilitate an informed rights-holders led reflection into the experience and potential of vindicating rights via the Collective Complaints Protocol of the Revised European Social Charter. It will give voice and agency to Local Authority tenants and assist them to use their learning/experience as the basis of inquiry and dialogue with key stake holders in relation to the Collective Complaint. It aims to advance progress in bringing the violations at the centre of this Collective Complaint into conformity with the Charter.

Organisation: Trim Family Resource Centre

Project Title: Traveller Women's Rights.

Summary: The aim of this project is to create capacity building workshops and participatory training to provide a supportive platform for Traveller women to share experiences and to empower them to better understand, claim and vindicate both equality and human rights. This project will enable Traveller women to better understand the justice system and their rights and will empower them to self-advocate.

Organisation: National LGBT Federation

Project Title: NXF Activist Academy

Summary: The aim of this project is to deliver training to empower a new generation of LGBT+ activists by learning from the experiences of those who have fought for LGBT+ rights in recent decades. Through this intergenerational training programme, participants will gain advocacy skills, increase their understanding of human rights and equality legislation, and develop plans for future activism. This will culminate in the development of strong, supportive networks among activists to advocate for their rights.

Organisation: Community Law & Mediation

Project Title: Research into unmet mediation need in Ireland.

Summary: The aim of this project is to produce qualitative and quantitative research on the unmet mediation need of the communities who because of economic, social, or other disadvantage are unable to access legal or mediation services. Rights-holders will be involved in shaping it and sharing their expertise by experience. It will raise awareness of the potential for mediation to assist on issues not catered for by existing services which will empower people and groups to better understand, claim and vindicate their equality and human rights.

Organisation: One in Four

Project Title: Advocacy Awareness Campaign

Summary: The aim of this project, is to create an advocacy awareness campaign to inform and empower victims of child sexual abuse to realise, recognise and claim their inalienable rights. Through the campaign and the creation of informative online content the project aims to assist and enable people to seek information, support and vindicate their rights.

Organisation: Aontas

Project Title: Community Education Against Disinformation – An AONTAS Adult Learning Programme

Summary: The aim of this project is to co-create a community education activity workbook, in collaboration with rights-holders, addressing issues of online disinformation, harnessing empathy for minority groups impacted by disinformation, promoting solidarity and inclusion for diverse communities living side by side. The project also aims at build practitioners' capacity to address disinformation and racism in the classroom, fostering changes in learners' understanding of how disinformation impacts the human rights of targeted communities.

Organisation: Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in collaboration with ShoutOut and Transgender Equality Network Ireland

Project Title: Know Your Rights: A Guide for Trans and Non-binary People

Summary: The aim of this project is to empower Trans and non-binary people to understand, claim and vindicate their rights in Ireland, and to support professionals to ensure the rights of members of this community are vindicated in their work. It will do so by developing a ‘Know Your Rights’ Guide and other resources that capture the lived experience of Trans and Non-binary people and their rights. It will outline their human rights, including rights to education, to healthcare, to equality at work, to safety and protection from harm to access services and to gender recognition – across people’s lifespans. This project will empower rights-holders by building their leadership capacity and expertise through training, and foster changes in understanding, attitudes, and behaviour of professionals.

Organisation: Laois Domestic Abuse Service

Project Title: ‘Know Your Rights’: Rights and Access to Justice, specific to Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control, specific to Laois.

Summary: The aim of this project is to create a multilingual leaflet providing clear and accurate information, to support women who have been subject to domestic abuse, in understanding the court and justice processes in Ireland, specific to domestic abuse legislation and processes. By translating and adapting the leaflet to the Laois context, the project aims to empower women who have been subject to domestic abuse and coercive control to be able to vindicate their rights.

Organisation: Irish Deaf Society

Project Title: Barriers to studying and working as an ISL Interpreter: Developing an evidence base to launch a campaign to increase the number of ISL Interpreters in Ireland.

Summary: The aim of this project is to develop an evidence base containing understandings about the barriers and challenges faced by prospective and professional ISL Interpreters. Informed by the research, a collaborative campaign will be developed and delivered to increase the number of interpreters so that Deaf ISL users can claim their right to ISL interpretation. This will also enable public bodies to fulfil their duty, thus allowing for full implementation of the ISL Act, which has yet to occur.

Organisation: Dublin South City Partnership (DSCP)

Project Title: Building capacity of rights holders on Human Rights and Equality Duty and Equality legislation

Summary: The aim of this project is to create a training programme to empower the diverse groups of rights holders within the Dublin South City Partnership (DSCP) area to better understand, claim and vindicate their rights using the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and the Equality Legislation framework. By increasing awareness and understanding, the project will foster changes in attitude and behaviour by empowering the DSCP and community leaders to bring together the community in advocating for their rights.

Organisation: Limerick Traveller Network under Exchange House Ireland partnering with Minceirs Whiden

Project Title: Traveller voter and political participation Campaign

Summary: The aim of this project is to empower the Traveller Community in Limerick City to increase their understanding and participation in voting, politics and power making structures and to support the community in registering to vote and in the use of their voting rights as a tool to promote social justice. By creating awareness, this project also aims to empower the Traveller Community to advocate for themselves and their rights.

Organisation: National Platform of Self Advocates

Project Title: How legislation can change your life - Understanding your rights. (Resources for people with intellectual disabilities to understand the UNCRPD and Irish law).

Summary: The aim of this project is to create an interactive, inclusive training programme to raise awareness, among people with intellectual disabilities, of legislation that affects their lives. This program will produce materials that are accessible and easily used by people with intellectual disabilities to train their peers. The project will not only raise awareness of the barriers that people with intellectual disabilities face, but it will also empower rights holders to advocate for equality and human rights.

Organisation: AsIAm partnering with the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Project Title: Autistic peoples' rights to accessible information and protection from sexual harm - How Autistic people, their families and those who support them understand consent in theory and practice.

Summary: The aim of this project is to carry out qualitative research to increase the understanding of what Autistic people and their families think and feel about consent and to understand what education, information, and communication they need to navigate consent and protect against sexual harm. It will include Autistic people and their families at each stage of the project. The goal of the research is to provide an evidence base to address gaps in knowledge and information and make recommendations on the steps that need to be taken to address these gaps.

Organisation: National Women's Council Ireland (NWC)

Project Title: Realising equality and human rights for all women and girls – A Shadow Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Summary: The aim of this project is, through a consultation process, to develop and submit a Shadow Report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The report will provide a coordinated voice for civil society on the current challenges facing women and girls with a particular focus on marginalised groups of women. It will also promote an awareness and understanding of the broad spectrum of rights afforded to women and girls under national and international law and policy, and the actions needed by the State to strengthen the protection of equality and human rights for all women and girls. The project aims to empower women to advocate for change and strengthen equality and human rights for all women and girls living in Ireland.

Organisation: Threshold

Project Title: Renting at the Frontier: Protecting the rights of licensees in Ireland.

Summary: The aim of the project is to conduct research on the lived experiences of licensees, to identify gaps in legislation that contribute to violations of the right to adequate housing and discrimination. This research will empower licensees and advocate for policymakers to enact legal reforms that not only extend legal protections, but also create a system with increased security of tenure, fair rents, and decent living conditions. This will lead to a more equitable and secure housing environment for all licensees, regardless of their background.

Organisation: Doras

Project Title: Analysis of Reception Conditions and Quality Standards in International Protection Applicant Accommodation.

Summary: The aim of the project is to assess Ireland's provision of material reception conditions and integration supports for international protection applicants (IPAs), including emergency accommodation centres, and to build their capacity to self-advocate for improved conditions. The research will be shaped by IPAs and capture their lived experience. A research report setting out findings and recommendations, will be promoted to policy stakeholders.

Strand C: Promoting Climate Justice, Environmental Justice, and a Just Transition

Organisation: Women's Collective Ireland

Project Title: Climate Justice, Environmental Justice, and a Just Transition Training Awareness Seminar.

Summary: The aim of this project is to build Women's Collective Ireland (WCI) community leaders' knowledge and capacity on climate justice, environmental justice, and just transition. This learning will then be shared at local level in WCI's grassroots women's projects in under-resourced communities, both urban and rural, creating space for dialogue on how communities can have a voice in relation to the actions that can be taken.

Organisation: Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)

Project Title: Ensuring a Just Transition across DEIS School Communities.

Summary: The aim of the project is to empower schools to support a just transition to a more sustainable future. The project aims to provide a detailed programme of professional development for teachers working in schools awarded DEIS status, ensuring that the most marginalised pupils will benefit. The project will contribute to the better understanding of rights in relation to the effects of climate change and other environmental issues from a human rights and equality perspective.

Public awareness

Our “Because we’re all human/ Means we’re all equal” series of campaigns continued with our For Equality in Ageing national awareness campaign, which ran throughout January across TV, radio, social and digital advertising.

It featured interviews with people from different backgrounds sharing personal perspectives on the impact of ageing.

The purpose of the campaign was to challenge societal and individual attitudes towards older people in Ireland.



IHREC “Because we’re all human/ Means we’re all equal” series of campaigns and “For Equality in Ageing” national awareness campaigns



In the media

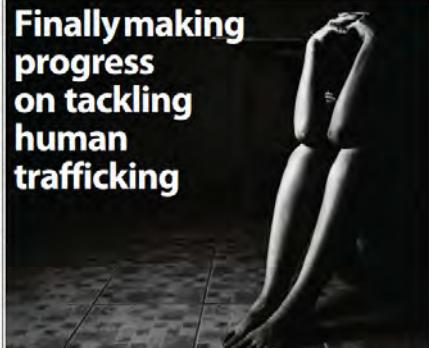
Our engagement with local, national, international and online media is central to our work in communicating key issues of human rights and equality. Throughout the year, we proactively engaged with media on a broad range issues, arising from our legal, policy and research work. These included raising concerns about Mother and Baby Institutions and Redress, accommodation for international protection applicants, the need to add a socio-economic ground of discrimination in our equality laws and legislation to revoke Irish citizenship without proper legislative scrutiny.

The resulting media coverage included stories and editorials in our national newspapers as well as numerous appearances of the Chief Commissioner and our Commissioners on broadcast media including TV, radio and news podcasts.

Particular highlights relate to the extensive coverage of our important Own Name Proceedings against the State in relation to accommodation for international protection applicants and coverage of our engagement with the Council of Europe on Ireland's ongoing failure to fully implement the O'Keeffe judgement.

The national reporting mechanism is a key step in the State making progress on tackling the crime at a time of massive movement of people worldwide, writes **Ann Murphy** 

Finally making progress on tackling human trafficking



THE IRISH TIMES / ANN MURPHY

I'm in Europe again to fight for abuse victims



MICHAEL O'NEILL / THE IRISH TIMES / COMMUNIQUE / ECF / COUNCIL OF EUROPE / IRISH HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY COMMISSION

HOMEPAGE / NEWS / COURT & CRIME

State disputes IHREC's right to pursue parts of asylum seeker challenge

The case centres on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's challenge to the Government's failure to provide accommodation to all men seeking international protection.



THE IRISH TIMES / ARTHUR

Povertyism should be illegal, like racism and sexism



Jim Clarke and Oliver De Schutter
Opinion

Povertyism is Ireland's most pernicious and divisive social and political resource.

FACT **66** There is a dangerous and perverse need that has become endemic in Ireland to turn a blind eye to the most basic of human rights – the right to a decent standard of living.

FACT **66** There is a dangerous and perverse need that has become endemic in Ireland to turn a blind eye to the most basic of human rights – the right to a decent standard of living.

THE IRISH TIMES / JIM CLARKE / OLIVER DE SCHUTTER

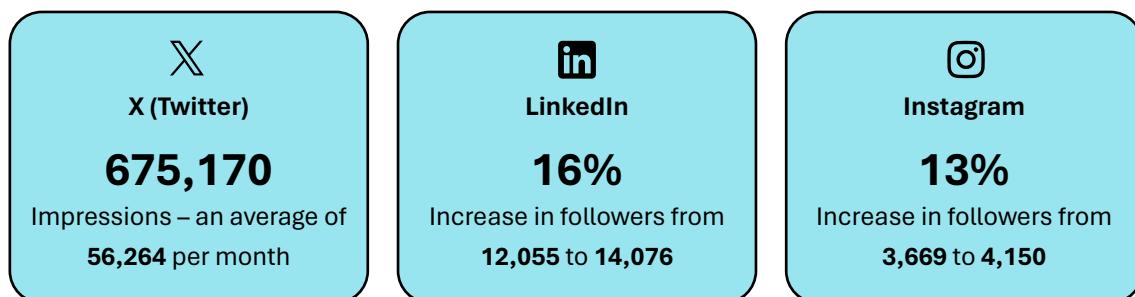
Irish Independent News Opinion Business Sport Life Style Irish

Inequality 'fuelling division and political polarisation,' human rights watchdog warns



REPORT / SHANE PHILIPS / THE IRISH TIMES / IRISH HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY COMMISSION / SNAKE IMAGE

Social media highlights

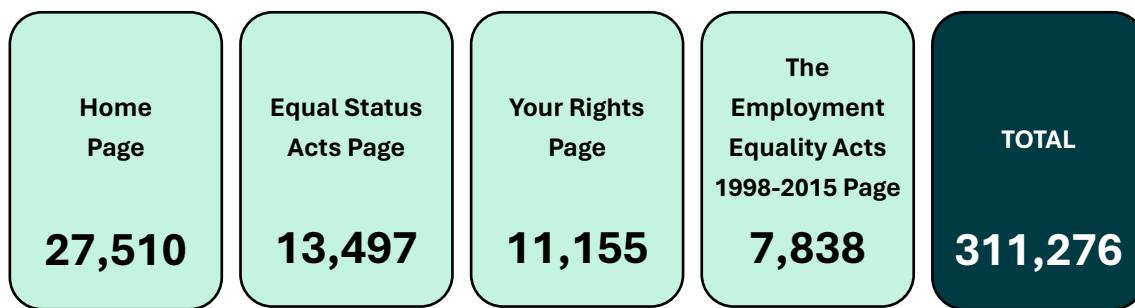


Followers/Subscribers at the end of year:



Website highlights

Most visited pages and their views:



Strategic Planning

Between February and August, we carried out various stakeholder engagement and consultation exercises to inform our priority aims and objectives for the next strategy cycle, which will cover 2025-2027.

We ran an open public consultation process with civil society and members of the public, seeking views on key equality and human rights issues.

To supplement this consultation, we held one-to-one interviews with senior representatives of 10 relevant agencies and civil society, including non-governmental organisations, trade unions and business representatives, experts in education, representatives of religious thought and belief, and public bodies.

Separately, our statutory Disability Advisory Committee, which assists and advises us on disability rights on an ongoing basis, also had a session on strategy that fed into the process.

Our staff team had two full day workshops on strategy. These included undertaking a political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental ('PESTLE') analysis, reflecting on our impact to date and discussing how we could make best use of our expertise, statutory powers and resources over the next three years.

In addition, we held three hybrid thought forum events to examine emerging and evolving equality and human rights issues. These brought our Commission Members and staff together with experts from academia, civil society organisations, fellow national equality and human rights bodies in Europe, and the public sector. The themes for the events were 'Keeping hate out of communities', 'Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation', and 'Climate, environmental justice and just transition'.

To further our engagement with specific rights holder groups which are less frequently heard from, we had meetings with the National Roma Network and with young people active in youth organisations and civil society.

The Strategy Statement 2025-2027 will be launched in 2025.



IHREC At 10 – Marking 10 Years of Promoting Human Rights and Equality

Throughout the year, we highlighted the impact of our work over the last 10 years across a series of videos and a dedicated webpage. We also refreshed our branding to make it more accessible and updated our event space to visually represent our work. This culminated in a celebratory event at the Epic Museum on Human Rights Day, with representatives from civil society, public bodies, academia and the legal professions who have been involved in our work, in attendance.

During the event, we reflected on our challenges and successes across the decade and hosted two panel discussions on the topics of: Taking a Legal Route to Bring about Change and Putting the Voice of Rights-holders at the Centre of Monitoring and Compliance. We also experienced performances from Saol Sisters, Young Voices of Africa and Musicantia.





Corporate Governance and Structure

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is an independent statutory body, established on 1 November 2014 under the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014*. Our statutory mandate is to protect and promote human rights and equality in Ireland and to build a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding. We are Ireland's National Human Rights Institution and National Equality Body.

Commission

The Commission has fifteen Members, one of whom is the Chief Commissioner (see Appendix 1). The provisions of the Act are designed to ensure the independence of the Commission in its work. Members of the Commission are appointed by the President, following a resolution by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Commission is a body corporate. It accounts directly to the Oireachtas for its statutory functions and the Members independently determine its policy and activities. Decision-making at Commission level is conducted, where possible, on the basis of consensus. Where there is a diversity of opinion on a given matter, a majority vote may be taken. The structural independence of the Commission, in accordance with the Paris Principles, has been recognised in its "A" Status accreditation as an NHRI with the United Nations.

The Commission holds as many meetings as may be necessary for the fulfilment of its functions but in each year must hold not less than one meeting in each period of three months.

The Commission held **8** ordinary plenary meetings, on the following dates: 1 February; 14 March; 25 April; 6 June; 18 July; 12 September; 24 October; and 5 December.

6 extraordinary meetings also took place, to facilitate the recording of time sensitive decisions in between the scheduled ordinary meetings. The extraordinary plenary meetings took place on the following dates: 19 January; 26 January; 16 April; 23 July; 8 November; and 15 November.

A schedule of 2024 Attendance, Fees and Expenses is set out in Appendix 5.

The Commission must publish, on a three-yearly basis, its strategy statement setting out key objectives and related strategies, including use of resources of the Commission. The strategy statement must be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Commission also approves an annual work plan and budget. The Commission agreed its third three-year Strategy Statement 2022-2024 which was laid before the Oireachtas in December 2021.

The Commission takes strategic decisions on statutory functions, including on Commission policy statements and on the use of its legal powers, except where specifically delegated.

The Commission has delegated its power to provide legal and other assistance under section 40 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* to the Head of Legal. Its powers under section 32 of the Act in regard to Equality Reviews and action plans are delegated to the Head of Legal in consultation with the Director.

The day-to-day management of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is the responsibility of the Director. The Director acts as a direct liaison between the Commission and senior management. The role and responsibilities of the Director are set out in sections 20-23 of the Act.

The Director and senior management follow the strategic direction set by the Commission. The Director provides the Commission with information in relation to the performance of their functions, including information in respect of those functions in so far as they relate to the financial affairs of the Commission, as the Commission may require. In addition, the Director ensures that all Commission members have a clear understanding of key activities and decisions, and of any significant risks likely to arise.

Committees

The Commission has established a number of Committees to assist in governance and in progressing the work of the Commission in relation to its strategic priorities. These include the Audit and Risk Committee, Legal Casework Committee and Policy and Research Committee.

Membership of each of these Committees, and attendance during the year is included in Appendix 3.

Audit and Risk Committee

The purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee is to consider the adequacy and effectiveness of our internal control systems, control environment and control procedures; oversee the work of the Internal Audit and to provide advice and professional guidance in relation to the systems of risk management and internal control to the Director as Accounting Officer and to the Commission.

There were 4 meetings held: 28 February; 10 June; 26 September; and 27 November.

Legal Casework Committee

The purpose of the Legal Casework Committee is to advise the Commission on strategy in respect of legal casework and to develop guidelines, for adoption by the Commission, for the performance of the litigation/casework function of the Commission – amicus curiae, own name proceedings, Workplace Relations Commission proceedings and legal assistance schemes.

There were 8 meetings and 2 extraordinary meetings held throughout the year: 29 January; 4 March; 15 April; 27 May; 15 July; 23 July; 2 September; 14 October; 8 November; and 25 November.

Policy and Research Committee

The purpose of the Policy and Research Committee is to advise the Commission on strategy in respect of its policy and research functions, including its legislative interventions, international reporting, policy statements and data and research programmes. There were 4 meetings held: 27 February; 21 May; 26 September; and 9 December.

Advisory committees

Section 18 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 provides that for the purpose of establishing and maintaining effective co-operation with representatives of relevant agencies and civil society, we may appoint Advisory Committees, as we see fit, to assist and advise us on matters relating to our functions.

These include a Disability Advisory Committee and a Worker and Employer Advisory Committee.

Disability Advisory Committee

Following the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2018 the Commission established a Disability Advisory Committee under Section 18 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

The role of the DAC is:

- ➔ to assist and advise the Commission on matters related to its function of keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice in the State relating to the protection of people with disabilities; and
- ➔ to advise the Commission on the fulfilment of its independent monitoring role under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

In its work has considered a range of disability rights issues, including:

- Establishment of the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for the UNCRPD, including data collection systems, indicators and benchmarks, participation of disabled people in monitoring, communicating about the UNCRPD and priority focus areas.
- Access to justice for disabled people.
- Participation of disabled people in political and public decision-making.
- Assisted decision-making.
- National equality strategies.
- The cost of disability.
- Intersectional analysis and international reporting process.
- IHREC strategic planning process for 2025-2027 strategic cycle.

The DAC heard from a number of external speakers and organisations in the course of considering these issues, including the Ombudsman Ger Deering, the Disability Commissioner of Malta, Rhoda Garland, and Disability Activist Dr Patrick Malone.

There were 6 meetings held: 11 March; 20 May; 15 July; 16 September; 11 November; and 9 December.

Worker Employer Advisory Committee

The Worker Employer Advisory Committee (WEAC) was established by the Commission in 2017 under section 18 of the Act.

The role of the Committee is to advise the Commission on:

- Employment equality and workplace issues.
- Equal status in service provision.
- Human rights in the workplace and service provision.
- Diversity and interculturalism, and
- Such other matters as are referred to it by the Commission.

The Advisory Committee includes worker and employer representatives nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions ('ICTU') and by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation ('Ibec').

A huge part of the Committee’s work during the year was to give input to the development and delivery of the fourth conference, Equality at Work – Promoting Socio-Economic Equality in Employment, in a series of conferences on ‘Equality at Work.’ Representatives of employers and trade unions took an active part in the conference which was very well attended by three hundred public and private sector employers, and civil society organisations working on inclusive employment policy and programmes. The Committee also reviewed a draft of the ‘Guide for Employers on Inclusive Employment for Travellers and Roma’ due to be published in 2025.

There were two meetings of the Advisory Committee on 20 February and 17 June.

Governance

The overall governance and control framework within the Commission is guided by:

- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014;
- Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service, with which the Commission is required to comply as funded by an Exchequer Vote;
- Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016;
- Ethics in Public Office Act 1995;
- Standards in Public Office Act 2001;
- The Role and Responsibilities of Accounting Officers;
- Public Financial Procedures 2012.
- Public Spending Code 2013.

The Commission has a Corporate Governance Assurance Agreement in place with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Staff of the Commission

In accordance with section 24 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, the Commission is the employer of its staff who are civil servants in the service of the State.

The executive, led by the Director, implements the strategy and policies of the Commission.

As at 31 December, we had 85 staff (see **Appendix 4**). The National Shared Services Office (‘NSSO’) provides HR, pensions and payroll administration shared

services to the Commission. The Commission utilises ePMDS (Performance Management Development System) to monitor and support the performance and development of its staff. The Commission facilitates regular communication on key issues between management and recognised staff trade unions.

The organisation consists of six teams:

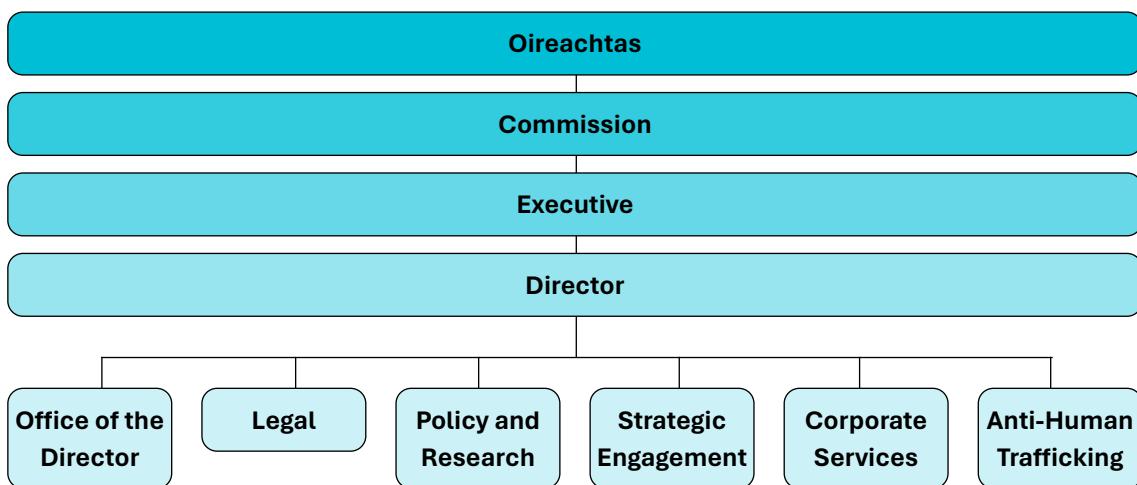
- Legal
- Policy and Research
- Strategic Engagement
- Corporate Services
- Anti-Human Trafficking
- Office of the Director

Senior management

Senior management at 31 December:*

- Director: Deirdre Malone;
- Head of Legal: Michael O'Neill;
- Head of Policy and Research: Dr Iris Elliott;
- Head of Strategic Engagement: Jean O'Mahony;
- Head of Corporate Services: Ailish Farrelly.

*The Head of Anti-Human Trafficking Team retired during the year. At year end, this team was restructured and expanded to reflect new mandates, and a new appointee had been selected to the position of Head of Monitoring and Compliance.



Funding and financial management

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is funded through a Vote of the Oireachtas. The Director is the Accounting Officer for the Commission's Vote and this responsibility is separate to the governance responsibilities of the Commission members.

Each year the Accounting Officer must prepare the Appropriation Account for the Commission Vote for submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Accounting Officer may then be called to appear before the Committee of Public Accounts of the Dáil to give evidence about the Account.

The Appropriation Account for the year ended 31 December 2024 was submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General on 31 March 2025.

As required, this included the Accounting Officer's statement on the Commission's systems of internal financial control. In accordance with the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993, the audited account will be published by September in the Report on the Accounts of the Public Services. The account will be published and available at www.audgen.gov.ie. As such, the financial information referred to within this report is provisional and will be finalised on completion of the audit of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Appropriation Account by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The 2024 gross estimate provision including a supplementary, for Vote 25 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was €9,093k of which €5,673k was allocated for pay related expenditure, and €3,420k of which was allocated to non-pay expenditure. The provisional (prior to audit) expenditure outturn was €8,916k of which €5,529k was pay and €3,387k was non-pay. At year end, a surplus of €154k was liable for surrender to the Exchequer.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 requires that bodies make a number of additional disclosures in relation to certain categories of expenditure. These are set out in Appendix 5.

Protected disclosures

As a public body, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is required under section 22 of the *Protected Disclosures Act 2014* to publish an annual report in relation to the number of protected disclosures made to it in the preceding year, and the action taken in response to any such protected disclosures.

No protected disclosures were made to the Commission in the period 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024.

Disability Act 2005

Under Part 5 of the *Disability Act 2005*, public sector bodies are required to report on their level of employment of people with disabilities. The results of a self-reporting Staff Census conducted in March showed that 14% of our staff have a disability, exceeding the 4.5% target for employment of people with disabilities. This information was provided to the National Disability Authority in April 2025.

Willing Able Mentoring Programme

We continued to engage with the AHEAD Willing Able Mentoring ('WAM') programme, a paid work placement programme that aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities. At year end we were awaiting a placement graduate under this programme.

Disability Liaison/Access Officer

We increased the number of Access Officers to five, who assist with accessibility under the areas of:

- Access to the Physical Building
- Access to our Website
- Access to our Legal Services
- Access to Your Rights
- Access to Human Resources for staff joining IHREC

This is in addition to two Disability Liaison Officers to assist staff with reasonable accommodations.

Climate Action Mandate

In November we published a Climate Action Mandate Roadmap addressing GHG emissions, implementation of the mandate, sustainability activities report and compliance with Circular 1/2020: Procedures for offsetting the emissions associated with official air travel. All public bodies, including IHREC, are required

are required to report energy data annually using the SEAI's online monitoring and reporting (M&R) system. Our Fossil CO2 levels were zero in the year, and at the baseline. Total CO2 emissions was 35.6% percent below the baseline of 67,995 kgs CO2. To achieve the 2030 target total CO2 must reduce by another 66.3% from 2024 levels within the next six years. Through the Green Team and Facilities and Governance teams in Corporate Services, we will develop further actions in 2025 in relation to energy efficiency.

Freedom of Information Act 2014

We continue to meet our obligations in relation to responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. FOI Decisions and Types of Requests are outlined below:

— FOI decisions		— Category of requestor	
Granted	9	Journalist	14
Part Granted	4	Business Interest Group	2
Refused	6	Client	0
Withdrawn/Held Outside FOI	2	Oireachtas	0
Total	21	Other	5
		Total	21

Two Internal Reviews were received, and one FOI decision was appealed to the Office of the Information Commissioner.

Reporting

Report under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

Section 42(1) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 provides that:

A public body shall, in the performance of its functions have regard to the need to:

1. eliminate discrimination;
2. promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and
3. protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

Under this statutory Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty every public body is required to Assess, Address and Report on how they incorporate equality and human rights into their work. Protection and promotion of human rights and equality, and the elimination of discrimination, are core to our functions and purpose, however, to meet our statutory obligations under the Duty we must also take account of human rights and equality in how we implement our functions and go about our daily work.

This year, we published our new Strategy Statement 2025-2027 which consolidates the work carried out in the previous cycle 2022-2024. In keeping with the principles of the Duty, the priorities outlined in the new Strategy Statement have been informed on the basis of extensive consultation across all sectors of society, from a variety of backgrounds, and across the generations.

The following are the developments and achievements in regard to the policies, plans and actions which have been put in place during the year, the final year of our previous strategy statement, to address the human rights and equality issues which we have assessed to be relevant to our functions and purpose.

As we enter into a new strategic cycle, further actions will be developed to progress the objectives which have been outlined in the IHREC Strategic Statement 2025-2027 which will be reported on in due course.

Accessibility

— Refreshed Branding

Driven by accessibility and an aim to bring our work to the widest range of users, we refreshed our branding to make it more accessible, but also to make it more digital friendly. We implemented new brand guidelines, tone of voice and language guidelines, templates, and brand assets that are fully compliant with accessibility standards and have people at the core.



— Access Officers

We increased the amount of Access Officers to five, who assist with accessibility under the areas of:

- Access to the Physical Building,
- Access to our Website
- Access to our Legal Services
- Access to Your Rights
- Access to Human Resources for staff joining IHREC

— Disability Liaison Officers / Reasonable Accommodations

Our two Disability Liaison Officers continued to assist staff with reasonable accommodations.

A Reasonable Accommodation Passport was introduced for staff use to ensure a coherent and supportive approach to the provision of accommodations.

— Broadening our communication of information on rights through Irish Sign Language

All videos that we produce have both captions and ISL as standard practice. We also produced one of our IHREC @10 entirely in ISL. The video featured a Deaf person who experienced discrimination in an educational establishment. In the video, she explains her case and the assistance we provided to help her vindicate her rights.

— Getting information on rights to groups at particular risk

We carried out a number of stakeholder engagement and consultation exercises to inform our Strategy Statement. We held focus groups to further our engagement with specific rights holder groups which are less frequently heard from, for example the Roma community, and young people. All feedback received during these conversation events fed into the development of the Strategy Statement. As an outcome of this process, a strategic priority to “Develop robust responses to current and emerging threats to human rights and equality” which includes an aim to “Protect and promote human rights and equality in communities by partnering with and supporting civil society to: combat misinformation, disinformation, hate and poverty; increase solidarity; and support effective community responses” was included in the plan.

— Making information available in plain English

We contracted a company to provide plain English services to the entire organisation.

— Addressing digital exclusion

Our Your Rights Information Service continues to be offered by phone and post, as well as online.

— Our Website

We began work to redevelop our website to make it more accessible. To inform this work, we went through an extensive review process which included meeting with representatives from civil society organisations working with disabled people, immigrants and Travellers. We also consulted with staff.

Our Staff

— Recruitment

We are an equal opportunities employer and applications are welcome from those with a disability. Reasonable Accommodations are offered at every stage of recruitment.

— Building capacity of management to deal with human rights and equality issues in the workplace

Training was offered to staff on Section 42, Diversity and Inclusion, Accessibility, Human Rights and Equality, Dignity at Work, Code of Standards and Behaviour, Unconscious Bias, Inclusive Language. Staff were encouraged to attend a number of talks such as Gender 101, Coming Out of the HIV Closet, and Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging.

Report under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021

Under section 4b of the revised Official Languages Act, we are obliged to report on our performance of obligations under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. In compliance with new obligations that came into force during the year, we appointed the manager responsible for corporate governance, facilities and ICT to oversee our compliance with the Acts.

Our Irish Language Officers provided practical advice and support to all teams in relation to the Irish language and our obligations as a public body. A list of basic phrases was shared with all staff to use throughout their daily work and continuous assistance was provided to all staff to ensure their out of office messages and email signatures continued to be bilingual. The Irish Language Officers presented throughout the year to all staff on the IHREC Irish Language Scheme and surveyed all staff on attitudes towards the Irish language and the level of communication received regarding our Irish language obligations. A questionnaire was prepared as part of the induction material for new staff to ensure they are aware of our Irish language obligations as a public body.

A presentation from a seminar given by Oifig an Choimisiún Teanga on the Official Languages Acts during Seachtain na Gaeilge was shared with all staff as well as information on the newly formed Irish Language Public Sector Network. The Irish Committee, which was formed in 2022, ran a successful programme of events for Seachtain na Gaeilge, grew in membership and met throughout the year to discuss methods of promoting the Irish Language across the organisation.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Commission Member Profiles

Chief Commissioner Liam Herrick

Liam Herrick leads the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in its mission to build a just and inclusive society that protects and promotes human rights and equality. Liam was appointed Chief Commissioner in November. Prior to this, he held the role of Executive Director of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties since 2016. He worked as Advisor to President Michael D. Higgins. He was Executive Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) between 2007 and 2014. He also worked as the first Head of Legislation and Policy at the former Irish Human Rights Commission and with the Law Reform Commission. He is a former member of IHREC (2013-2017) and sat on the Minister for Justice and Equality's Strategic Review Group on Penal Policy (2012-2014).

Term of Office: 25 November 2024 – 24 November 2029.

Chief Commissioner Sinéad Gibney

Sinéad Gibney was Chief Commissioner from July 2020 – February this year. Sinéad was the inaugural Director of the Commission from 2014-2016, and prior to this she built and led Google Ireland's corporate social responsibility function, Social Action. Sinéad is a former chair of the board of One Family and has served on a number of other boards; Digital Charity Lab, Victims' Rights Alliance and Responsible Research & Innovation industry advisory group.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 29 February 2024

Sinéad Gibney resigned as Chief Commissioner on 29 February 2024

Jim Clarken

Jim Clarken is the CEO of Oxfam Ireland and an Executive Director of Oxfam International. He has extensive leadership and corporate governance experience, working at senior management and board level in the corporate sector and international NGO sector for almost thirty years. A passionate advocate for the rights of women, Jim has driven a gender-focus at Oxfam and has led the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence. He has been involved in the foundation of the Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition, Stop Climate Chaos, the Irish Coalition for Business and Human Rights and is a former chair of Dóchas.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Michael Finucane

Michael Finucane is a solicitor and human rights activist based in Dublin. He is Principal Solicitor at his Dublin-based law firm, which specialises in criminal defence and human rights litigation. He is a Human Rights Committee Member in the Law Society of Ireland, which he also chaired from 2012 to 2014 and is a consultant and trainer with the SUPRALAT Project at Dublin City University/ Law Society of Ireland.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Adam Harris

Adam Harris is the Founder and CEO of AsIAm, Ireland's National Autism Charity. Adam founded the organisation based on his own experiences growing up on the autism spectrum. Today, AsIAm provides support to the autism people and their families, advocates on behalf of the community and works to support public and private sector organisations and communities in becoming inclusive and accessible.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Professor Kathleen Lynch

Professor Kathleen Lynch is a sociologist and has devoted her life's work to promoting equality, human rights, and social justice through education and research. She has published eight books and three-hundred articles on all types of equality issues. She played the lead role in establishing the Equality Studies Centre in UCD in 1990 and the School of Social Justice in 2004/5. She also led the development of the M.Sc. and Diploma in Equality Studies in UCD in 1990, developed several Outreach Equality Studies programmes in collaboration with Community Groups over a thirty-year period, and pioneered the development of the BCL (Law and Social Justice) with the UCD Law Faculty in 2013/14.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Dr Salome Mbugua

Dr Salome Mbugua is a researcher, gender equality activist and human rights advocate. She is the founder and former CEO of AkiDwA -The Migrant Women's Network and has over 20 years' experience of working with under-represented groups in particular women, children, and the youth, in Europe, Africa and internationally. Since 2015 she has been supporting the development of Wezesha, an African Diaspora led development organisation supporting women and children

who are affected, or are likely to be affected by conflicts, violence, war and poverty, with piloting projects in Kenya and the DRC. Salome is the chairperson of European Network of Migrant Women and sits on the EU Expert group on Economic Migration.

Term of Office: 31 July 2023 – 30 July 2028

Dr Rosaleen McDonagh

Dr Rosaleen McDonagh is a Traveller woman with a disability. Originally from Sligo, she is the fourth eldest in a family of twenty children. She worked in Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre for ten years, managing the Violence Against Women programme, and remains a board member. She is a regular contributor to the Irish Times and has written within the framework of a Traveller feminist perspective. Rosaleen's work as a playwright includes Mainstream, The Baby Doll Project, Stuck, She's Not Mine, and Rings.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Sunniva McDonagh

Sunniva McDonagh is Senior Counsel who practices mainly in the areas of fundamental rights, administrative and constitutional law. She has acted in many leading cases including in the area of immigration and fair trial rights in historical abuse cases. Sunniva has a particular interest in human rights and the Rule of Law. She is the Vice President of the Management Board of the Fundamental Rights Agency, a former Chair of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal and a current Chair of the Mental Health Commission. She is a Member of the Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee of An Garda Síochána, and a Member of the Press Council of Ireland. Sunniva is serving her second term, having been first appointed to serve from November 2014 – October 2019.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Dr Lucy Michael

Dr Lucy Michael is a sociologist in practice and consultant on equality and integration issues. Her work particularly addresses racist discrimination and violence, experiences of victims, and the roles of statutory institutions and civil society in combating hate crime and exclusion. Lucy has conducted research with a wide range of public and private sector bodies including the International Organisation for Migration, UK Home Office and European Network Against Racism. She is co-author with INAR of the iReport.ie racist incident reporting

system used to map racism in Ireland. She previously held lecturing posts at Ulster University and University of Hull, and is a former President of the Sociological Association of Ireland.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Professor Ray Murphy

Professor Ray Murphy is a professor at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway. In addition to his position at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, he is on the faculty of the International Institute for Criminal Investigations. He was the EU Fundamental Rights Agency Senior Expert for Ireland and a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Human Rights Institutes. Ray is a former member and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee of Amnesty International (Ireland). He has also conducted training on behalf of the ICRC, No Peace without Justice, Amnesty International, the UN, and the International Institute for Humanitarian Law and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (Canada). Ray is serving his second term, having been first appointed to serve from November 2014 – October 2019.

Term of Office: 31 July 2020 – 30 July 2025

Dr. Andrew Forde

Andrew Forde is a senior civil servant with extensive national and international human rights experience. Dr. Forde is currently head of Rural Regeneration at the Department of Rural and Community Development and holds both LLM and PhD degrees in international human rights law, with specific expertise centering on the European Convention on Human Rights. Dr. Forde is also a Visiting Fellow at the Irish Centre for Human Rights and writes extensively on matters related to human rights in Europe.

Term of Office: 31 July 2023 – 30 July 2028

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC is a human rights lawyer and barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, and in February 2023 she was appointed as Ireland's Special Rapporteur on Child Protection. She has acted in many landmark cases before the European Court of Human Rights, international tribunals and the UK, including representing bereaved families and survivors of the 7/7 London Bombings and the Hillsborough disaster and acting in test cases which have changed the law on issues including the rights of children in police custody, State obligations to

victims and survivors of domestic abuse and child sexual abuse, and abortion in Northern Ireland.

Term of Office: 31 July 2023 – 30 July 2028

Professor Colin Harvey

Colin Harvey is a Professor of Human Rights Law at Queen's University Belfast and Director of the Human Rights Centre. Professor Harvey has served as a Commissioner on the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, has taught human rights law for almost 30 years and has written and engaged extensively on human rights law locally and globally.

Term of Office: 31 July 2023 – 30 July 2028

Eoin Ronayne

Eoin Ronayne is the current Chairperson of Waterford area Partnership Company and Special Projects Adviser in Fórsa. Eoin has an extensive background as a senior trade union official and was engaged by Fórsa on a range of operational projects and policy delivery for the Irish Congress of Trades Union (ICTU). Eoin has been a member of the ICTU Executive for many years and is also the Ireland Executive Committee member of the European Federation of Public Service Union (EPSU).

Term of Office: 31 July 2023 – 30 July 2028

Noeline Blackwell

Noeline Blackwell is a solicitor, litigator advocate and manager with a wide experience of human rights standards, operations, practices and challenges. Noeline is the current CEO of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre since 2016. She was Director General (CEO) of FLAC between 2005 and 2016. Noeline's previous board memberships include the International Federation of Human rights, Front Line Defenders, Immigrant Council of Ireland, and Amnesty International Ireland.

Term of Office: 31 July 2023 – 30 July 2028

Appendix 2: Attendance at Commission Meetings

The Commission held 8 ordinary plenary meetings. 6 extraordinary meetings of the Commission also took place, to facilitate the recording of time-sensitive decisions between the scheduled ordinary meetings. Commission members receive an annual fee of €7,695.

1 member did not receive any fee under the One Person One Salary principle.

Ordinary meetings:

Commission Member	Meetings Attended
Liam Herrick	1/1
Sinéad Gibney	0/1
Noeline Blackwell	6/8
Jim Clarken	4/8
Michael Finucane	8/8
Dr Andrew Forde	6/8
Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC	5/8
Adam Harris	6/8
Prof Colin Harvey	6/8
Prof Kathleen Lynch	8/8
Dr Salome Mbugua	7/8
Dr Rosaleen McDonagh	6/8
Sunniva McDonagh SC	7/8
Dr Lucy Michael	7/8
Prof Ray Murphy	6/8
Eoin Ronayne	8/8

Extraordinary meetings:

Commission Member	Meetings Attended
Liam Herrick	0/0
Sinéad Gibney	2/2
Noeline Blackwell	6/6
Jim Clarken	2/6
Michael Finucane	4/6
Dr Andrew Forde	6/6
Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC	3/6
Adam Harris	3/6
Prof Colin Harvey	3/6
Prof Kathleen Lynch	5/6
Dr Salome Mbugua	3/6
Dr Rosaleen McDonagh	4/6
Sunniva McDonagh SC	3/6
Dr Lucy Michael	5/6
Prof Ray Murphy	4/6
Eoin Ronayne	6/6

Appendix 3: Attendance at Committees

Legal Casework Committee

Member	Meetings Attended
Michael Finucane (Chair)	10/10
Sinéad Gibney	1/1
Noeline Blackwell	7/10
Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC FRSA	2/10
Prof Colin Harvey	7/10
Sunniva McDonagh SC	2/4
Prof Ray Murphy	8/10

Policy and Research Committee

Member	Meetings Attended
Dr Lucy Michael (Chair)	4/4
Sinéad Gibney	0/1
Noeline Blackwell	3/4
Dr Andrew Forde	3/4
Prof Colin Harvey	3/4
Dr Salome Mbugua	0/4

Audit and Risk Committee

Member	Meetings Attended
Lawrence Dunne (External Chair)	2/3
Aisling McKeon (External Member)	4/4
Jim Clarken	2/4
Eoin Ronayne	3/4
Kathleen Lynch	1/1

Disability Advisory Committee

Member	Meetings Attended
Gary Allen	5/6
Jacqui Browne	6/6
Adrian Carroll	6/6
Dr John Bosco Conama	3/6
Michelle (Shelly) Gaynor	5/6
Eliona Gjecaj	5/6
Brian Hayes	6/6
Dr Vivian Rath	4/6
Fiona Anderson	6/6
James Cawley	4/6
Peadar O'Dea	4/6
Aoife Price	5/6
Michael Seifu	6/6
Dr Rosaleen McDonagh	6/6
Adam Harris	3/6

Worker and Employer Advisory Committee

Member	Meetings Attended
Prof Kathleen Lynch (Vice-chair)	2/2
Dr Salome Mbugua	1/2
Jim Clarken (Chair)	1/2
Eoin Ronayne	1/2
David Joyce (ICTU)	2/2
Sam Owens (Ibec)	1/2
Deirdre O'Connor (INTO)	2/2
Megan O'Sullivan-Sweeney (Ibec)	1/2
Ethel Buckley (SIPTU)	1/2
Seamus Dooley (NUJ)	2/2
Dr Kara McGann (Ibec)	2/2
Aisling Campbell (Accenture)	2/2
Jonathan McDade (Small Firms Association)	2/2
Vivienne Kavanagh (Dublin Bus)	2/2
Katie Morgan (Fórsa)	1/2

Appendix 4: Commission staff

The staff complement of the Commission as at 31 December was 85, with the grading structure as follows:

Grade	Number of staff per grade
Chief Commissioner	1
Director	1
Principal Officer	4
Assistant Principal Officer	16
Higher Legal Executive	1
Higher Executive Officer	18
Administrative Officer	11
Legal Executive	3
Executive Officer	18
Clerical Officer	11
Service Officer	1
Total	85

Appendix 5: Additional financial disclosures

The Commission is funded through a Vote of the Oireachtas. The Director is the Accounting Officer for the Commission's Vote.

The Appropriation Account 2024 for Vote 25 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General for audit on 31 March 2025.

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 requires that bodies make a number of additional disclosures in relation to certain categories of expenditure and remuneration and these are set out below:

Employee short-term benefits breakdown

The number of Department employees whose total employee benefits (including basic pay, allowances, overtime; excluding employer PRSI, employer pension costs) for the financial year fell between €20,000 and €59,999 and within each band of €10,000 from €60,000 upwards are as follows.

Short-term employee benefits	Number of Employees in Band	
€	2023	2024
60,000-69,999	5	5
70,000-79,999	8	10
80,000-89,999	6	5
90,000-99,999	1	3
100,000-109,999	1	1
110,000-119,999	1	1
120,000-129,999	1	1
130,000-139,999		1
140,000-149,999		
150,000-159,999		
160,000-169,999		
170,000-179,000	1	

Note: For the purposes of this disclosure, short term employee benefits in relation to services rendered during the reporting period include salary, overtime allowances and other payments made on behalf of the employee, but exclude employer's PRSI.

Key management employee benefits	2023 €	2024 €
Commission Member Fees	62,325	97,408.00
Salary (Including Chief Commissioner)	826,592	542,152
Allowances	14,642	14,790
Termination benefits	-	-
Health Insurance	-	-
	903,559	676,230

Key management personnel in the Commission consists of the members of the Commission, including the full time Chief Commissioner, the Director and the members of the Senior Management Team. Figures represent actual remuneration for the period.

Chief Commissioner Salary	2023 €	2024 €
Basic Pay	171,148	51,046
Health Insurance	-	-
Total	171,148	51,046*

Mr Liam Herrick was appointed as Chief Commissioner on 25th November 2024. Chief Commissioner role was vacant for part of the year.

*Includes partial year salaries for both outgoing Chief Commissioner and current Chief Commissioner.

Director salary	2023 €	2024 €
Basic Pay	120,005	123,274
Health Insurance	-	-
Total	120,005	123,274

Consultancy costs	2023 €	2024 €
Advisory	108,878	135,426
Total	108,878	135,426

Travel and subsistence – Domestic and international	2023 €	2024 €
Domestic travel		
Commission	4,321	3,575
Employees	5,350	7,602
International Travel		
Commission	745	624
Employees	4,322	9,734
Total	14,738	21,535

Hospitality costs	2023 €	2024 €
Staff Hospitality	2,227	0
Third Party Hospitality		
Total	2,227	0

Appendix 6: Publications

Title	Date
Consultation on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Strategy Statement 2025-2027	February
Letter from the Director of IHREC to the Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice regarding the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Act 2023.	February
Letter from the Director of IHREC to the Minister for Justice regarding the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Act 2023.	February
Letter to the Minister of Justice on provisions relating to Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation in the General Scheme of the Defamation (Amendment) Bill 2023	February
IHREC Contribution to the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls to the Human Rights Council on 'Prostitution and violence against women and girls'	February
Ireland and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	February
Correspondence to Minister Calleary from IHREC and ENNHRI on the proposed EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)	March
Contribution to the European Commission's 5th Progress Report on the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union	March
Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the Commission's views on issues affecting women and girls in Ireland to inform the development of the new National Strategy on Women and Girls	March
Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on United Nations and Council of Europe recommendations on issues affecting women and girls in Ireland to inform the development of the new National Strategy on Women and Girls	March
The Equality Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Irish Labour Market	April
Letter from the Director of IHREC to the Minister for Education regarding the Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill.	May
Submission to the Minister for Justice on the General Scheme of the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) (Amendment) Bill	May
Policy Statement on SocioEconomic Status as a ground of discrimination under the Equality Acts	May

Title	Date
Communication to Council of Europe Committee of Ministers from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in the case of O'Keeffe v. Ireland (Application No. 35810/09), May 2024	May
Annual Report 2023	June
Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2023	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by Cork City Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by Donegal County Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by Limerick City and County Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by Mayo County Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by South Dublin County Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by Tipperary County Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
An Account of the Equality Action Plan prepared by Wicklow County Council in respect of Traveller specific accommodation	June
Submission to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the General Scheme of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024	June
Ireland and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	June
Letter to GREVIO on supplementary information in relation to Ireland's first baseline evaluation under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence	July
Letter to the Council of Europe's GREVIO following their evaluation visit to Ireland	July
Letter to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, on Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review	July
Letter to the Department of the Taoiseach on the Evaluation of the State's response to the Covid-19 pandemic	July
Letter to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications on Ireland's 2023 Voluntary National Review	July
Letter to the Minister for Justice regarding proposed amendments on revocation of naturalised citizenship, (10 July 2024)	July

Title	Date
Letter to the Minister for Justice regarding proposed amendments on revocation of naturalised citizenship, (16 July 2024)	July
Letter to the Minister for Justice regarding proposed amendments on revocation of naturalised citizenship, (17 July 2024)	July
Letter to the Minister for Social Protection regarding the Green Paper on Disability Reform – A Public Consultation to Reform Disability Payments in Ireland	July
Letter to the Secretariat of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) regarding their visit to Ireland as part of the 8th periodic cycle	July
Letter to the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, following their visit to Ireland as part of the 5th monitoring cycle	July
Key Equality and Human Rights Recommendations for the Next Government	July
Submission to the Public Consultation on National Implementation of EU Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (AI Act)	July
Ireland and the 6th Monitoring Cycle of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance	July
Observations on the draft second National Plan on Business and Human Rights	July
Observations on the draft National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028 and draft Action Plan 2024–2028	July
Letter from the Director of IHREC to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth regarding provisions relating to Non-Disclosure Agreements in the General Scheme of the Maternity Protection (Amendment) and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2024	August
Letter to the Minister for Health, regarding proposals to regulate international surrogacy amid EU-wide concerns for reproductive exploitation and trafficking	August
Letter to the Minister for Health, regarding revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive obligations to prevent and combat exploitation of surrogacy and Part 8 of the (Amended) Assisted Human Reproduction Bill – International Surrogacy	August
Letter to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning, on the right to political participation, including the right to vote, for disabled people.	August
Letter to An Taoiseach, regarding the adoption of EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies	September

Title	Date
Letter to the Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, regarding HRC Resolutions focusing on NHRIs and the rights of persons with disabilities AND NHRIs and national monitoring, implementation, review and follow up mechanisms (NMIRF).	September
Letter to the Artificial Intelligence and Future Manufacturing Unit in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, regarding a request for Observations on the Council of Europe Legal Convention on AI	September
Letter to the Artificial Intelligence and Future Manufacturing Unit in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, regarding further observations on the Council of Europe Legal Convention on AI	September
Letter to the Artificial Intelligence and Future Manufacturing Unit in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, regarding further observations on the Council of Europe Legal Convention on AI	September
Letter to the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána, regarding the operation by the Garda National Immigration Bureau of selective passport checks on buses that cross the border while undertaking journeys within the Ireland-UK Common Travel Area	September
Letter to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, regarding a structural issue in relation to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014	September
Letter to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, regarding Budget 2023, and specifically on the budgetary allocation under Vote 25 for the operation of IHREC as Ireland's National Human Rights Institution and National Equality Body	September
Letter to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, regarding the adoption of EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies	September
Letter to the Minister for Finance, regarding the adoption of EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies	September
Letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, regarding The Nationality and Borders Bill and Electronic Travel Authorisation	September
Letter to the Minister for Justice, regarding An Taoiseach's comments on the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022	September
Letter to the Minister for Justice, regarding the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill	September
Letter to the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, regarding the adoption of EU Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies	September

Title	Date
Letter to the Secretary General of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, regarding the review of the Equality Acts	September
Letter to the Tánaiste, regarding HRC Resolutions focusing on NHRIs and the rights of persons with disabilities AND NHRIs and national monitoring, implementation, review and follow up mechanisms (NMIRF).	September
Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland – Third Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive	September
Mid-Term Report to the UN Human Rights Council for the Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Ireland	October
Letter to Minister for Housing, Local Government and Planning regarding the right to political participation, including exercising the right to vote, for disabled people	November
Climate Action Roadmap	November
Equality and Human Rights on the Island of Ireland after Brexit: Annual joint report of IHREC, ECNI and NIHRC on the implementation of Article 2 of the Windsor Framework	December
Letter on the Programme for Government December 2024	December
Letter to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, regarding the State's accession to the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	December
Letter to the Minister of Justice on the pause in Syrian International Protection determination	December
Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty – 2nd Edition	December
Access to Justice: Implementation of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	December
Access to Justice: A Baseline Study of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	December
Access to Justice: A Baseline Study of Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Research Brief	December

Appendix 7: Grants

We continued to provide support for projects awarded under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme. Set out below are grant projects that closed in during the year.

Projects closed in 2024

Organisation: Mercy Law Resource Centre

Project Title: Access to Justice and Rights for Long-term Homeless Children and their Families

Summary: The aim of this project is to carry out qualitative research, to capture the lived experience of children and families, including Traveller and Roma families in emergency homeless accommodation and the effects of long-term homelessness on children in these families and to produce evidence-based practical recommendations on how to improve access to justice and the vindication of the rights of these children and their families.

Organisation: EPIC - Empowering People in Care

Project Title: Experiences of state care amongst children and young people who have sought international protection: A qualitative study

Summary: The aim of this project is to carry out qualitative research of the specific challenges faced by care-experienced children and young people who have sought international protection in Ireland. The objective will be to analyse whether their experiences reflect their rights under the UNCRC and the Refugee Convention and to produce a set of policy recommendations.

Organisation: European Anti-Poverty Network (Community Platform)

Project Title: Civil Society Submission to UN International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights fourth periodic report of Ireland

Summary: The aim of this project is to prepare a report from the Community Platform on economic, social and cultural rights issues in Ireland with a set of recommendations and submit it to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights in advance of Ireland's examination on the extent to which it is meeting its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This report aims to improve access to these rights while in the process creating awareness and building experience in using such human rights frameworks and reporting processes as a means of bringing about positive change.

Organisation: Oxfam Ireland

Partner: Irish Refugee Council

Project Title: Activists and Advocates: workshops for change

Summary: The aim of this project is to share knowledge, skills and experiences to enhance the advocacy capacity of refugee-led groups and people who have moved to Ireland to access justice by influencing international protection policy and engaging with public bodies to shape legislation, policy, practice and services in the area of migration and asylum policy. This project also aims to build better relationships and a deeper understanding of each other's work so that we can be a stronger force working together for the rights and wellbeing of migrants, refugees and people seeking protection, and against oppression and inequality.

Organisation: Family Carers Ireland

Project Title: Civil Society Submission to UN International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights fourth periodic report of Ireland

Summary: The aim of this project is to provide legal support to a pilot group of carers to empower them as rights-holders and supporters of people with disabilities, to navigate the new Decision Making Representative (DMR) application process in a timely and supported manner, and increase awareness of the Assisted Decision-Making Act amongst carers and to extract the learning from those cases and support the development of a template that other carers can use to apply to be a DMR.

Organisation: Migrant Rights Centre Ireland

Project Title: Increase equality and reduce risk by promoting human rights compliant pathways for safe and regular migration

Summary: The aim of this project is to increase the evidence base in order to better advocate for changes in legislation and policy, which will establish or

improve human rights compliant pathways for safe and regular migration in order to reduce risks and to ensure equality and justice.

This project will raise awareness of positive and innovative immigration pathways (e.g. innovative schemes that enable less qualified people to move for work, positive examples of progression from short term permissions; clearer entitlement to family reunification). By showcasing good practices, we plan to raise awareness, inform debate, advocate for reform and better practice.

Organisation: RADE

Project Title: Create Your Rights

Summary: Through a series of creative workshops, the aim of this project is to encourage critical reflection about the issue of rights and to empower people with experience of addiction to self-advocate more strongly in the future. Also to create awareness amongst the wider public by publishing selected creative work completed in the workshops. This will include a book of creative writing and illustrations on human rights themes which participants will present alongside an open panel discussion in the form of a public event.

Organisation: Longford Traveller Healthcare Project –Longford Community Resources

Partner: Irish Network Against Racism, and Community Action Network

Project Title: Building advocacy capacity and advancing the rights of minority ethnic community leaders

Summary: The aim of this project is to build the leadership and training capacity of Traveller, Roma, Migrant and Minority Rights-holders in the Longford area to understand their human and protective Equality legislation. This will include how to vindicate them, linking them to addressing individual, institutional and structural racism and discrimination. The training will be supported by INAR's Minority Ethnic Leaders and participants will act as multipliers in their communities.

Organisation: The Bohemian Football Club

Partner: Environmental Justice Centre at Community Law and Mediation

Project Title: Football Empowering Local Environmental Justice Champions

Summary: The aim of this project is to engage communities in shaping the development and dissemination of educational materials to raise awareness of environmental justice, rights, and access to those rights for the members and fans of Bohemian Football Club and the surrounding communities. These materials will enable these local communities to understand how to participate in environmental decisions that affect them and can seek accountability when environmental obligations are not met. The resources will connect environmental and climate justice with the day-to-day issues people experience and to resonate with audiences who are not yet environmentally engaged.

Organisation: Doras

Project Title: Access to Justice for International Protection Applicants (IPAs): Understanding their experiences with the criminal justice system in Ireland

Summary: The aim of this project, using participatory and peer-led research, is to provide an evidence-base that captures an understanding of the experience of international protection applicants who were victims of crime with the criminal justice system and to develop a set of practical recommendations for change, and engage duty-bearers in the criminal justice system on the report's findings.

Organisation: UISCE

Project Title: Agency, Access, and Solutions: A living experience analysis of how to identify and address current gaps in equity of service provision in homeless accommodation

Summary: The aim of this project is to develop the leadership capacity of people experiencing substance use disorder who are currently facing great barriers in accessing their rights within emergency homeless accommodation so that they can advocate for their rights to be involved in decisions that affect them. This participatory peer led process will allow for people to understand their rights and strengthen their ability to share this knowledge, engage with relevant stakeholders and become actors for change by advocating for access to justice and rights within the sector. Through a dialogue process between rights holders and duty bearers, the project aims to will build a whole system responsibility for the progressive realisation of these rights.

Organisation: Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT)

Project Title: Know Your Rights: Access to Justice and Rights for People in Prison

Summary: The aim of this project is to organise a conference to build understanding of prisoners' rights among those working to support prisoners, in particular migrant and ethnic minority prisoners and build capacity to better advocate for the vindication of these rights as well as to more widely disseminate the Prisoners' Know Your Rights booklet to increase further awareness and understanding.

Organisation: Open Doors Initiative

Project Title: Fresh Start – An Employer Support Service Toolkit & Training

Summary: The aim of this project is, informed by research with employers and people with a conviction attempting to access work, to develop an Employer Tool-kit and deliver training to dispel the myths and create awareness among employers, informed by the lived experience of those impacted by systemic barriers, of the benefits of hiring people with past convictions. Through awareness raising and training work with employers to remove these obstacles and actively hire and retain people, providing them with a fresh start.

Organisation: National Advocacy Council of Brothers of Charity Services Ireland

Project Title: Rights Awareness Training Programme – Fully Inclusive and Accessible

Summary: The aim of this project, led by the Advocates on the National Advocacy Council, is to develop an accessible training programme including the development of videos to build the capacity and confidence of people with intellectual disabilities on their rights and how to advocate for and exercise them.

Organisation: National Women's Council

Project Title: Auto-enrolment from a care and gender-based lens

Summary: The aim of this project is to conduct research to assess the gendered impact of implementing auto-enrolment in the new retirement savings scheme,

particularly in exacerbating inequalities between unpaid carers and paid workers. The project also proposes reforms that both ensure income adequacy of all workers in old age, particularly women, while also recognising the contribution of unpaid care work. In so doing, it attempts to overcome institutional discrimination against unpaid care workers, the majority of whom are women.

Organisation: Waterford Integration Services

Project Title: Understanding and Responding to Hate and Extremism in our Communities

Summary: The aim of this project is provide solution focused regional training workshops (with a diversity and intersectional focus) in Waterford and the South East to build the capacity of grassroots communities, e.g. ethnic led groups, the LGBTI+ sector and economic and socially challenged communities, as well as community leaders and elected representatives to counter efforts to create division and hate in communities who are already challenged in terms of poverty, lack of opportunity, the rising cost of living and accommodation crisis. The project will also develop resource packs tailored for Waterford and the South East, which can act as a model for other communities.

Organisation: Project Arts Centre

Partner: Dublin Theatre of the Deaf

Project Title: Challenging Ableism towards the Deaf Community in the Arts

Summary: The aim of this project is to promote the eradication of ableism through public understanding, raising awareness, and encouraging crucial dialogue around the barriers for the Deaf community in accessing and participating in the arts; it will create practical change through training, artistic support, ongoing engagement with the Dublin Theatre of the Deaf and the presentation of ambitious new works as well as creating visibility for the Deaf community through a series of events /residencies at Project Arts Centre- including ISL interpreted for events and performances; and increasing the use of ISL across all areas of Project Arts Centre programme. The development of this project was informed by an extensive consultation process that led to the development of the Project Arts Centre's, Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

Organisation: Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland

Project Title: Tackling homophobia and transphobia through supporting LGBTQ+ inclusive primary schools.

Summary: The aim of this project is to develop an evidence-based quality standards framework and accompanying resources to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in primary schools across Ireland. Developed in consultation with and endorsed by key sectoral stakeholders, the project outputs will support school communities to create LGBTQ+ inclusive schools, while also informing strategy and policy decisions at national level. The project will contribute to the eradication of homophobia and transphobia by fostering changes in attitudes and behaviours in primary education, as well as providing increased evidence to advocate for equality-based policies, strategies and practices.

Organisation: Women's Collective Ireland

Partner: National Women's Council of Ireland

Project Title: Women's Collective Ireland (WCI) - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Awareness Seminar

Summary: The aim of this project to promote human rights, equality and intercultural understanding and to progress a shared organisational approach, and understanding of intersectional discrimination and its impacts. This will be achieved through awareness raising workshops for local leaders in the Women's Collective Network on intersectional and multiple levels of discrimination experienced by women and to multiply the learning in their local women's groups.

Organisation: Age Action

Project Title: Challenge Ageism - Reframing Older Person's Views of Themselves

Summary: The aim of this project is to create and co-produce with older people a training workshop and set of videos that will support older people to recognise and challenge self-directed ageism. It is expected that workshop participants will be able to use their agency to challenge ageism as a barrier to age equality.

Organisation: Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)

Project Title: Speak Out Against Racism campaign

Summary: The aim of this project is to create awareness among and support international students, including in English language colleges, to know their rights and report incidence of racism by providing information on equality legislation and how to vindicate their rights if they have been discriminated against through a booklet, video and online campaign co-produced with students. Students will be more aware of their rights and how to report racism. The material will be made available in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Organisation: Hope and Courage Collective Project - Uplift

Partner: Community Work Ireland

Project Title: Understanding and responding to hate and extremism in our communities

Summary: The aim of this project is, through a training programme in four pilot areas of Ireland, to build the consciousness, capacity and confidence of community development workers and community leaders including ethnic minority, migrant and LGBTI+ leaders to act as multipliers in preventing the spread of extremism and hate in their communities, whilst simultaneously developing communities of solidarity, inclusion, welcome and respect. The training will be backed up by resources guides and the networking of those involved.

Organisation: Hawkeswell Theatre

Partner: Sligo/Leitrim Community Inclusion Services, National Learning Network and ThisAbility

Project Title: SHINE – Music participation programme for people with Intellectual Disabilities

Summary: The aim of this project, informed by input from people with intellectual disabilities, is to eradicate ableism and ageism by integrating disability accessibility into the theatre's approach and programme by training musicians and music facilitators to understand and engage with diverse audiences, leading to a series of music workshops for older people with intellectual disabilities. This project will add to a whole of organisation approach to increase diversity at the theatre, strengthened community partnership, and trained musicians and music facilitators to work in this field.

Organisation: Mental Health Reform

Project Title: Mental Health in the Workplace: A Guide to Your Rights

Summary: The aim of this project is to develop a guide to support people with psychosocial disabilities to understand and claim their rights in the workplace. The guide will be informed by people with lived experience of psychosocial disabilities. A key objective of the project is to improve public understanding of the prevalence and impact of ableism in the context of mental health in Ireland. By increasing awareness and understanding of equality legislation and human rights, the project aims to support more people with psychosocial disabilities to avail of supports and reasonable accommodations, and claim their rights if they experience discrimination in the workplace.

Organisation: Ronanstown Women's CDP

Project Title: Connecting through the Medium of Craft

Summary: The aim of this project is to undertake a series of workshops to enable and empower women to participate and discuss together through the medium of craft with the goal of the eliminating isolation, racism and social injustice. Through the development of a blanket of hope, the project will bring women across the community together including migrant women and women international protection applicants. The gatherings will be an opportunity to build resilience and enable those who have experience of discrimination to access information on their human rights. The Blanket will be launched on International Women Day 2024.

Organisation: Rosemount Family Resource Centre

Project Title: Countering Ageism

Summary: The aim of this project is to promote the dignity and equality of rights of older people. A focus group of older people will be organised to get their opinions on how best to eradicate ageism and make the community more age friendly and aware. This will inform an approach to eradicate ageism by incorporating older community members in intergenerational activities, awareness conferences, volunteering opportunities and decision making.

Organisation: AsIAm

Project Title: Inclusive Education Practices Part 2: Exploring Codes of Behaviours in Primary, Secondary and Special School's in Ireland

Summary: The aim of this project is to conduct research to examine the use of codes of behaviour in our schooling system and to explore whether such instruments are in keeping with the spirit of the UNCRPD. The anticipated outcomes of this research is that it will shine a light on the ablest approaches taken when it comes to codes of behaviours in the Irish educational system. At its core, the project will examine what is needed for a fair and equitable educational experience for autistic school aged children/young people and the revision of codes of behaviour to reflect this.

Organisation: Youth Work Ireland Galway

Project Title: Youth Access Project

Summary: The aim of this project is to address ableism in the provision of public and social spaces for young people. It will bring together a diverse group of young people with disabilities to create a film documentary to raise their voice and highlight the issues impacting them regarding their exclusion from public and social spaces, leading to their inability to interact with their peers. The results of this project will be brought to the attention of decision makers, service providers and organisations that work with young people with the intention of creating more accessible spaces for all young people to engage with each other on an equal footing.

Organisation: Cork Traveller Visibility Group

Partner: Cork Traveller Women's Network

Project Title: Cork City Traveller Archive Project

Summary: The aim of this project is to compile and digitally archive a long and rich history of photographs and key documentation relating to Traveller heritage, activism (particularly human rights activism) and culture in Cork, to categorise it according to best practice with the involvement of a peer archivist and to make the material accessible to a wide audience. The goal is to create greater understanding and awareness among a wider audience of the struggles that Traveller activists have faced in terms of advocating for change and in the process build greater capacity for Travellers who want to train as archivists, as well as those who wish to better understand their history and heritage.

Organisation: Sports Against Racism Ireland

Project Title: Inclusive Education through Sport

Summary: The aim of this project is to co-produce, with ethnic minority young people, an education resource to be used in primary schools by teachers and students (10-13 years) that will complement and add value to a series of anti-discrimination and anti-racism workshops delivered through the medium of sport by youth educators in SARI. While the resource will be rolled out to all schools, the primary target groups are working class and disadvantage youth and children from diverse ethnic minority and indigenous Irish backgrounds.

Organisation: Irish Deaf Society

Project Title: Breaking Down the Barriers

Summary: The aim of this project is conduct qualitative research of deaf adult women and men about their employment experience over the last 10 years. It seeks to break down the barriers to equal employment opportunities by identifying areas that prevent deaf people from obtaining and maintaining employment, and finding solutions that will contribute to greater economic equality, increased choice and fairness in relation to the employment. Inner-City Organisations Network

Organisation: Inner-City Organisations Network

Project Title: Applying a Public Sector Duty Approach to the Human Rights and Equality Issues identified by Service Users of Drug Treatment Services In the North East Inner City (NEIC).

Summary: The aim of this project is to apply the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty approach to issues identified by service users of drug treatment projects in the North East Inner City. The project will deliver evidence based, peer led research as well as raising awareness of the Duty in a broader context through community events. The combined approach can be used to advocate for changes in legislation, policy and practice and lead to improved collaboration with duty bearers.

Organisation: Irish Traveller Movement

Project Title: Traveller Accommodation Rights and Policy Online Hub

Summary: The aim of this project is to create an online information hub on Traveller accommodation rights and policy in order to strengthen advocacy and organising capacity, and increase awareness of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and how it relates to improving Traveller accommodation rights for those who have had their rights systematically denied.

Organisation: SAOL Project

Project Title: Understanding and responding to addiction and domestic abuse in the North Inner City

Summary: The aim of this project is to carry out quantitative and qualitative research to increase evidence base on the scope and impact of addiction and domestic abuse on the North Inner City to inform and ensure that public services and supports are fit for purpose in terms of being integrated services and upholding the human rights of women who use substances and experience violence in their homes.

Organisation: Irish Penal Reform Trust

Project Title: Working with Conviction

Summary: The aim of this project is to undertake a study of the barriers to employment for individuals with previous convictions and whether they face discrimination in accessing decent and sufficient work which can in turn impact their right to an adequate standard of living and economic equality. It will include a specific focus on the attitudes of employers. The project aims to provide evidence to support the inclusion of a criminal conviction ground in the upcoming review of the equality legislation.

Organisation: Longford Women's Resource Group

Partner: National Women's Council of Ireland and Maynooth University

Project Title: Migrant women's experience of economic inequality

Summary: The aim of this project is to conduct research, to capture the lived experience of migrant women in rural communities in the Midlands of Ireland at risk of economic inequalities. The findings will be translated into co-created policy recommendations and practical measures to facilitate inclusion and active participation of migrant women in the workforce and more broadly. Tangible outcomes include a manual for rights holders to support their inclusion and participation in rural communities and a good practice guide for civil society organisations to ensure inclusion of migrant women in local decision-making structures.

Appendix 8: Your Rights data

Protected Ground	Equal Status Acts	Employment Equality Acts	Intoxicating Liquor Act	Total
Age	43	28	6	77
Civil Status	7	1	0	8
Disability	203	105	0	308
Family Status	11	21	0	32
Gender	21	39	0	60
Housing Assistance	24	0	0	24
Race	26	41	4	71
Religion	17	3	1	21
Sexual Orientation	2	5	0	7
Traveller Community	17	2	4	23
Ground not stated	53	145	3	201
Total	424	390	18	832

Human Rights Topics	Queries
Health Services (incl. mental health)	65
Housing	62
Immigration Genera	53
Asylum/International Protection	50
Historical Institutional Abuse/ Redress	45
Homelessness/Social Housing, Living Conditions	37
Accommodation for IP Applicants/Direct provision	34
Asylum Seekers/ Direct Provision	33
Private, Family Life, Home and Correspondence	26
Accommodation for Int and Temporary protection Applicants	24
Access to Justice (except for crime)	23
Family Law, Child Protect. (including custody)	16
General/Misc	15
Children's Rights	12
Immigration/Family Reunification/ Right to remain	9
Discrimination on Other Grounds (e.g. appearance)	9

Human Rights Topics	Queries
Temporary Protection	7
DSGBV General	6
Access to Education	5
EU Freedom of Movement	4
Environment/Climate	4
Human-Trafficking/Forced Labour	4
Issues with Disability Services	4
Prison Conditions	3
Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion - Art 9	3
Freedom of Expression - Art 10	3
Social Welfare (including Appeals)	3
Discrimination on Criminal Conviction	2
Unlawful Detentions	2
Fair Procedures/ Fair Trail	2
Inhuman, Degrading Treatment and Punishment	2
Executive Detention	1
Employment General/Industrial relations	1
Protection of Property	1
Right to Life - Art 2/ Right to Death	1
Decent Work/Right to Work	1
Total	572

Appendix 9: Monitoring Implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Overview

In December, we re-opened the compliance-monitoring portal to facilitate the monitoring of compliance levels among public bodies with section 42 (2) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

In total, 288 public bodies were invited on to the portal to review data gathered by the Public Sector Duty team. Public bodies were requested to submit a return via the portal with any clarifications or supplementary data relevant to their compliance with the Duty over the year ending 31 December, 2024.

The monitoring process aimed to ascertain whether public bodies had published, as required by section 42 of the IHREC Act:

- An equality and human rights assessment
- Policy plans and actions in place or proposed to be in place to address issues in that assessment
- A report on progress and achievements in addressing issues identified in the above

All of this information must be set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in the public bodies' strategic plan (howsoever described) and annual reports.

Results returned from the portal demonstrate a reasonable increase in progress on implementation of section 42(2) of the IHREC Act since 2023. However, the compliance levels still remain well short of what would be deemed appropriate for a statutory obligation. There were 94 (33%) public bodies who had completed and published their equality and human rights assessment. 104 (36%) of the public bodies had published their actions to address issues raised. While 20% are fully compliant with section 42 (2).

The information presented in this report reflects progress by public bodies on their compliance with section 42 (2) of the IHREC Act only – namely the requirement to publish relevant information. 288 public bodies were deemed to come into scope

of section 42 of the IHREC Act 2014 for the purposes of this reporting year. Public bodies were divided into 14 thematic sectors for statistical purposes.

Total publication rates

Figure 1 shows that **59** of the 288 public bodies were meeting their obligations under section 42(2) in full during the year, while 52 public bodies had partially met those obligations. This demonstrates a headline figure of 111 (39%) of public bodies meeting their publication obligations in part or in full.

A further 62 submissions to the portal by public bodies set out that, they were in the process of completing an assessment and/or taking steps to meet their obligations under section 42.

Publishing status in Figure 1 is determined based on whether a public body has published the equality and human rights assessment, policies, plans, actions and report required under section 42.

Figure 1.

Sector	Number of public bodies	Number Published	%	Number Partially Published	%	Number Not Published	%
Cultural Institution	15	2	7	1	7	13	86
Education	48	20	19	11	23	28	58
Environment & Energy	12	1	8	0	0	11	92
Financial & Economic Bodies	18	7	28	2	11	11	61
Government Department	18	12	39	5	28	6	33
Health & Wellbeing	23	7	13	4	17	16	70
Housing & Property	12	5	33	1	8	7	58
Justice & Legal	39	21	33	8	21	18	46
Local Authority	31	20	23	13	42	11	35
Other State Agency	24	7	21	2	8	17	71
Research and Advisory	8	3	13	2	25	5	63
State Company	21	2	8	0	0	19	92
Support and Development Bodies	9	3	11	2	22	6	67
Transport Bodies	10	1		1		9	

Sector	Number of public bodies	Number Published	%	Number Partially Published	%	Number Not Published	%
Overall Totals	288	59	20%	52	18%	177	61%

Equality and Human Rights assessment publication rates:

Figure 2 shows that 94 public bodies completed and published their equality and human rights assessment.

Figure 2.

Sector	Number of public bodies required to publish by thematic sector	Number of Published required assessment	%
Cultural Institution	15	1	7
Education	48	18	38
Environment & Energy	12	1	8
Financial & Economic Bodies	18	6	33
Government Department	18	9	50
Health & Wellbeing	23	7	30
Housing & Property	12	5	42
Justice & Legal	39	17	44
Local Authority	31	16	52
Other State Agency	24	7	29
Research and Advisory	8	2	25
State Company	21	2	10
Support and Development Bodies	9	2	22
Transport Bodies	10	1	10
Overall Totals	288	94	33%

Equality and Human Rights Policy/plans/action publication rates:

Figure 3 shows that 104 public bodies had set out policies, plans or actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address the issues identified in the assessment in 2024.

Figure 3.

Sector	Number of public bodies required to publish by thematic sector	Number of Published Plans	%
Cultural Institution	15	2	13
Education	48	18	38
Environment & Energy	12	2	17
Financial & Economic Bodies	18	7	39
Government Department	18	11	61
Health & Wellbeing	23	6	26
Housing & Property	12	5	42
Justice & Legal	39	19	49
Local Authority	31	19	61
Other State Agency	24	7	29
Research and Advisory	8	3	38
State Company	21	2	10
Support and Development Bodies	9	3	33
Transport Bodies	10	0	0
Overall Totals	288	104	36%

Equality and Human Rights report publication rates:

Figure 4 represents the total of public bodies who published a report on their progress (75). This was slightly higher than the total full compliance rate as a small number of bodies who had published detailed progress reports on actions either didn't publish their assessment or actions in advance.

Figure 4.

Sector	Number of public bodies required to publish disaggregated by sector	Number of Published report	%
Cultural Institution	15	2	13
Education	48	14	29
Environment & Energy	12	2	17
Financial & Economic Bodies	18	6	33
Government Department	18	9	50
Health & Wellbeing	23	3	13
Housing & Property	12	4	33
Justice & Legal	39	18	46
Local Authority	31	7	23
Other State Agency	24	4	17
Research and Advisory	8	2	25
State Company	21	2	10
Support and Development Bodies	9	2	22
Transport Bodies	10	0	0
Overall Totals	288	75	26%

Sub-sector breakdown:

- 31% of bodies under the aegis of a Governmental Department are meeting their publication obligations under section 42(2).
- 42% of third-level educational institutions fully or partially published.
- A further 12 (46%) third-level institutions made submissions to demonstrate commitment to the Duty and equality and human rights.
- 69% Education and Training Boards fully or partially published.
- 42% Regulatory & Oversight bodies fully or partially published.

Structures in Place

148 public bodies provided additional information to the Commission. 62 of these bodies had not published any of the required information and therefore set out the steps they were taking currently to implement section 42. Submissions indicated that bodies had one or more type of structure in place to support implementation of the Duty. This is especially evident in regard to having a dedicated working group on the Duty, a Duty implementation plan, and senior-level staff assigned responsibility for the Duty. Figure 6 below lists examples of the infrastructure public bodies have indicated is in place to support them in the implementation of the Duty.

Figure 6.

Indicated Structures in Place

Dedicated cross grade working group

Internal staff surveys and collection of equality data

Audit of policies and inclusion of Duty in policy or governance frameworks

Training of on equality and human rights for management

Completion of IHREC E-Learning module for all staff

Senior staff members undertaking the IPA in human rights and equality.

Senior-level staff assigned responsibility

Duty implementation plan

Accessibility and equality Officers appointed

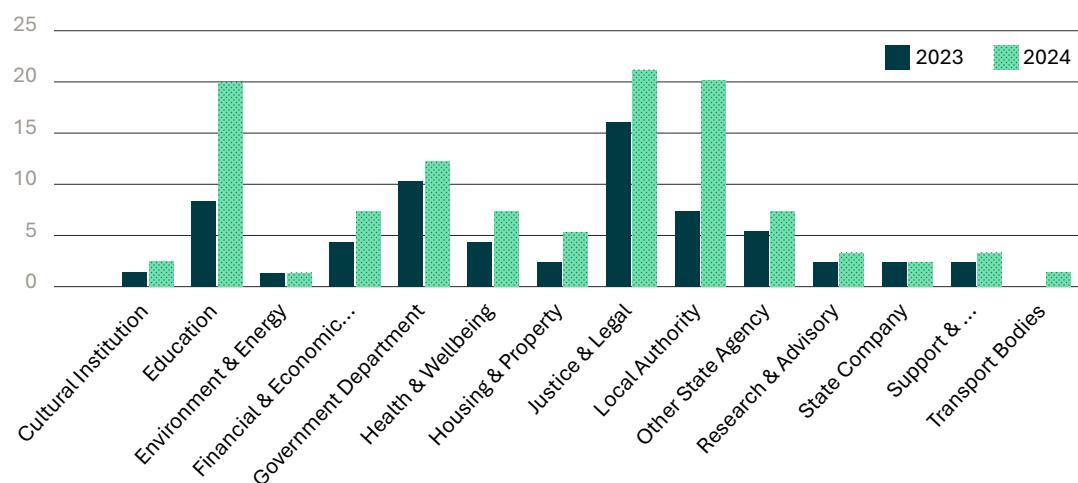
Increased visibility of equality and human rights values through communication channels and promotional materials

Annual comparative compliance

There has been a noticeable increase in public bodies publishing some or all the information required under section 42.2. 58 (20%) of the 288 public bodies met their publishing requirements in full (Assess, Address & Report). This was an increase of 20 (52%) from last year and an 8% increase in percent of total bodies (up from 12% in 2023).

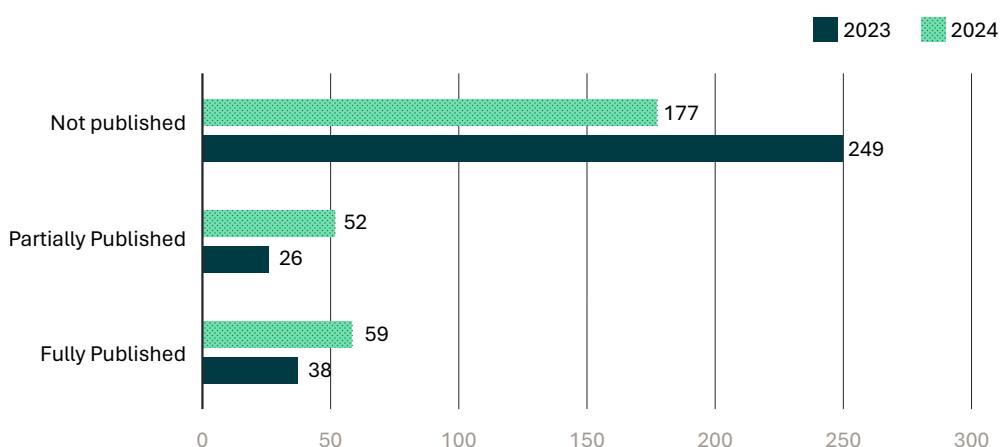
A further 52 (18%) had partially met the publishing requirements (Assess and/or Address only). This was up from 26 in 2023, which is an 100% increase. It is also a 10% increase in percentage of total bodies (up from 8%).

Figure 7. Sectorial Compliance



111 (39%) of public bodies have taken steps to meet their publishing obligations under section 42.2. Up from 64 (20%) in 2023 which demonstrates a 72% increase since launching the compliance monitoring system.

Figure 8. Publishing Status



There still remains 177 (62%) public bodies who are not complaint with any of publishing requirements. It is noteworthy that, 62 of the 148 submissions to the portal by public bodies set out that, while they had not published, they were in the process of completing an assessment and/or taking steps to meet their obligations under S.42. Therefore one would expect the publication figures to move in the direction of **172 (60%)**. This is a much healthier forecast than last years 48%. However it still demonstrates fundamental non-compliance with the section 42.

The fully compliant state remains significantly low for a statutory requirement. However, it has increased from 12% to 20% which is a 67% increase since the launch of the monitoring systems.

Key Findings

Evidence of compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty remains limited. Only 39% (111) of total respondents had met some or all of the requirements under Section 42(2) of the IHREC Act, namely to have conducted an assessment, identified actions to be taken on foot of that assessment, and reported on progress against those actions. The slow implementation is reflected across all sectors. There has been strong improvements in Local Authorities and the Education Sector which has been influenced by direct supports provided either by equality consultants or IHREC. However, there is also evidence from submissions of an intention by non-compliant bodies to address future compliance. Almost two thirds (60%) of public bodies have met some publication requirements or given details of their plans to implement the Duty.

In 2023 we reported that a large number of public bodies are producing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion polices and that it was important that clarity is maintained as to the statutory obligations on a public body under Section 42 of the IHREC Act, and that relevant actions are taken to meet those obligations. This remained the case in 2024 however a shift was noticeable as public bodies have started to use the Duty as a framework for implementing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion polices, as such policies alone are not an indicator that a public body is compliant with the requirements of Section 42.2 of the IHREC Act.

A total of 177 public bodies registered and accessed the public sector duty portal. The portal shows evidence of public bodies preparing to implement the Duty, with 21% of public bodies who haven't taken the steps required in section 42.2 indicating intent to progress implementation in the coming months or in their next strategic cycles.



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