

# SHRC

Scottish  
Human Rights  
Commission



## Theory of Change 2024-2028



**SHRC** Scottish  
Human Rights  
Commission

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# Introduction

This is the Scottish Human Rights Commission's (SHRC) Theory of Change (ToC). We use it to measure and articulate the impact of our work to deliver our general duty to promote human rights in Scotland, as outlined in the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006. This framework will guide SHRC's actions through our SHRC's 2024-28 Strategic Plan, and help track the impact as a result of our actions to promote awareness and understanding of, and respect for, human rights across Scotland.

To help the SHRC staff and members of the Commission, the Scottish Parliament and members of the public to better understand how we do this, the Theory of Change Map plots out specifically and simply, at a very high level:

- What we do
- Who with
- How they feel
- What they learn and gain
- What they do differently
- What difference this makes

By planning and monitoring our work through this pathway, we can demonstrate how the planned and deliberate actions of SHRC's activities contribute to measurable improvements in the realisation of human rights. SHRC staff use this model to plan their work, and capture our impact on an ongoing basis, through ongoing data collection, project pathways, and feedback mechanisms, all of which will inform SHRC's annual reporting to the Scottish Parliament and decision making about priorities.



# Contextual Analysis

## Strategic Context

SHRC is Scotland's human rights watchdog. Our goal is to create a fairer Scotland where human rights are respected, understood, and where there is justice when things go wrong. Our job is to work with people and communities to understand their experiences, hold public bodies to account where human rights are not upheld, and help them to do better. Our work is rooted in the PANEL principles: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Equality, Empowerment, and Legality.

## Individual and Social Context

As a bridge between civil society, the State, and the International Human Rights System, SHRC ensures that human rights standards are upheld. It faces challenges such as geographic disparities in Scotland and limited understanding of its role.

## Material Context

While Scotland's legal framework supports human rights, it also presents challenges due to its complexity. There are well documented accountability gaps in Scotland, and challenges in access to justice for all. There is potential scope for SHRC's mandate to be reviewed to play a stronger role.



# Theory of Change Narrative

The Theory of Change narrative reflects SHRC's commitment to ensuring accountability and promoting a rights-based culture. SHRC's strategic objectives for 2024-2028 focus on:



## Purpose

We will deliver and extend our mandate to improve accountability for human rights in Scotland; and inform the Scottish Parliament on the human rights implications of proposed legislation.



## People

We will ensure that the Commission is informed by, and works alongside, people and communities throughout Scotland who have direct knowledge of how human rights are

being experienced; and use our mandate to focus on poverty, places of detention; access to justice; and the rights of at risk specially-protected groups.



## Performance

We will monitor and report on how human rights are being experienced in Scotland, and play our part in embedding a stronger human rights culture.

The ToC Map identifies key outcomes and success indicators, which provide the framework for tracking SHRC's contributions to these objectives over the next four years.



# Theory of Change 2024-28



- We undertake research, explore and monitor human rights issues in visible, ambitious and innovative ways
- We review law and practice that impacts on the protection of human rights in Scotland
- We educate, raise awareness, and provide guidance, training and capacity building on human rights
- We promote a human rights based approach, advocating for culture change and more accountable public bodies
- We pursue action or remedies when things go wrong



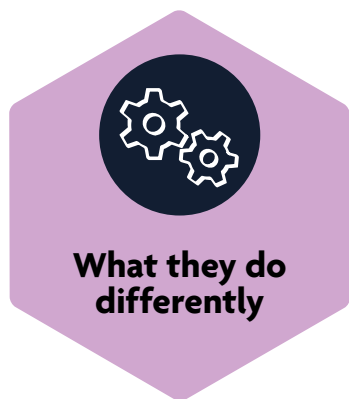
- Rights-holders (people with lived experience), human rights defenders, people with lived experience, and community and social interest groups
- RIOs
- Duty bearers (e.g. national and local government and Scottish public bodies)
- Local, regional, national and social media
- Third sector organisations
- Parliament
- Domestic Legal structures (e.g. courts, lawyers, tribunals etc.)
- International human rights structures (e.g. treaty bodies, special procedures, other NHRIs, FRA etc.)
- Academics



- Human rights are important and can make a difference, and people are motivated to act to protect rights
- Heard, seen, respected, empowered and valued
- The SHRC is an independent human rights watchdog. It is a credible, trusted, respected and transparent organisation that holds others to account.
- Duty-bearers feel observed and scrutinised



- Clarity and knowledge about what the SHRC is and what it can do
- Concrete knowledge of human rights standards and obligations and how they relate to them
- Capacity and shared understanding about what human rights based approaches are, and incorporation of human rights into law, policy, and practice
- Factual monitoring information of human rights concerns in Scotland
- An increased sense of responsibility for enacting human rights based approaches
- Ability to speak up, defend and advocate for human rights



- Organisations are responsive to the SHRC and fulfil their domestic and international human rights obligations
- There are more evidence-based decisions in relation to human rights realisation
- Speak up, defend and advocate for human rights
- The Scottish legal framework with relevance to human rights is strengthened



- People understand the relevance of human rights to different areas of their life
- Human rights concerns in law, policy and practice are identified and tackled
- People have an improved experience of their human rights
- Scotland has effective bodies who respect, protect and fulfil human rights

# Outcome Map Breakdown



## What We Do

SHRC engages in research, explores, monitors and reports on human rights compliance and experience, reviews law and practice, builds capacity through education, promotes a human rights-based approach (HRBA), and seeks remedies when human rights violations occur.

Progress Tracking: SHRC tracks success through research and monitoring outcomes, the quality of capacity building and training programmes on human rights and HRBA implementation. Legal interventions and follow-up activities based on evidence from spotlight projects also serve as indicators of progress.



## Who With

SHRC collaborates with rights-holders (people), human rights defenders, civil society, the third sector, government, Parliament, academics, domestic and international legal structures and the media to advance human rights objectives and promote systemic change.

Progress Tracking: SHRC tracks engagement with these stakeholders through baseline engagement data and feedback, assessing improvements in collaboration and the impact on policy and legislative changes. Media coverage, parliamentary engagement, and feedback from academic partners provide further metrics for assessing the effectiveness of these relationships.

Progress Tracking: SHRC tracks the breadth, depth and regularity of stakeholder engagement with its stakeholders against a series of baseline engagement maps collated for year one (2024-25). Formal and informal feedback provides further metrics for assessing the effectiveness of these relationships.



## How They Feel

SHRC works to ensure that stakeholders recognise the importance of human rights, feel empowered and respected, trust SHRC, and that duty-bearers feel observed and scrutinised.

Progress Tracking: Stakeholder feelings are assessed through surveys, project feedback, and reflective logging. The effectiveness of duty-bearers feeling scrutinised is tracked through their proactive engagements following SHRC's interventions, and their indications of a heightened awareness of SHRC's oversight role.



## What They Learn and Gain

SHRC aims to provide stakeholders with clear knowledge about human rights standards and obligations, reliable monitoring data about how those standards are being enjoyed, and the capacity to implement HRBA effectively.

Progress Tracking: Learning outcomes are assessed through stakeholder feedback, third party engagement with our outputs, training results, and the use of SHRC's practical tools and resources in informed decision-making and organisational practices.





## What They Do Differently

SHRC's work leads to more responsive organisations, increased evidence-based decision-making, and proactive advocacy for human rights. It also contributes to strengthening Scotland's human rights legal framework.

Progress Tracking: Behavioural changes are tracked through policy and legislative reforms, evidence-based decisions, and increased advocacy efforts from stakeholders and public bodies.



## What difference this makes

The ultimate goal is to improve public understanding of human rights, influence laws and policies, ensure that rights-holders, especially marginalised groups, experience better protection and respect for their rights and have effective bodies that respect, protect, and fulfill human rights.

Progress Tracking: SHRC monitors improvements in public understanding, changes in law and policy, redress and remedy, and enhanced experiences of rights-holders through surveys, formal/informal feedback mechanisms, and assessments of public bodies' effectiveness in respecting human rights.

## Conclusion

By promoting accountability, building capacity, and working with a range of partners, SHRC aims to ensure that human rights are respected and upheld for all. SHRC's Theory of Change outlines a clear and actionable path to demonstrating how all of our work contributes to creating a fairer Scotland where human rights are respected, understood, and where there is justice when things go wrong.

