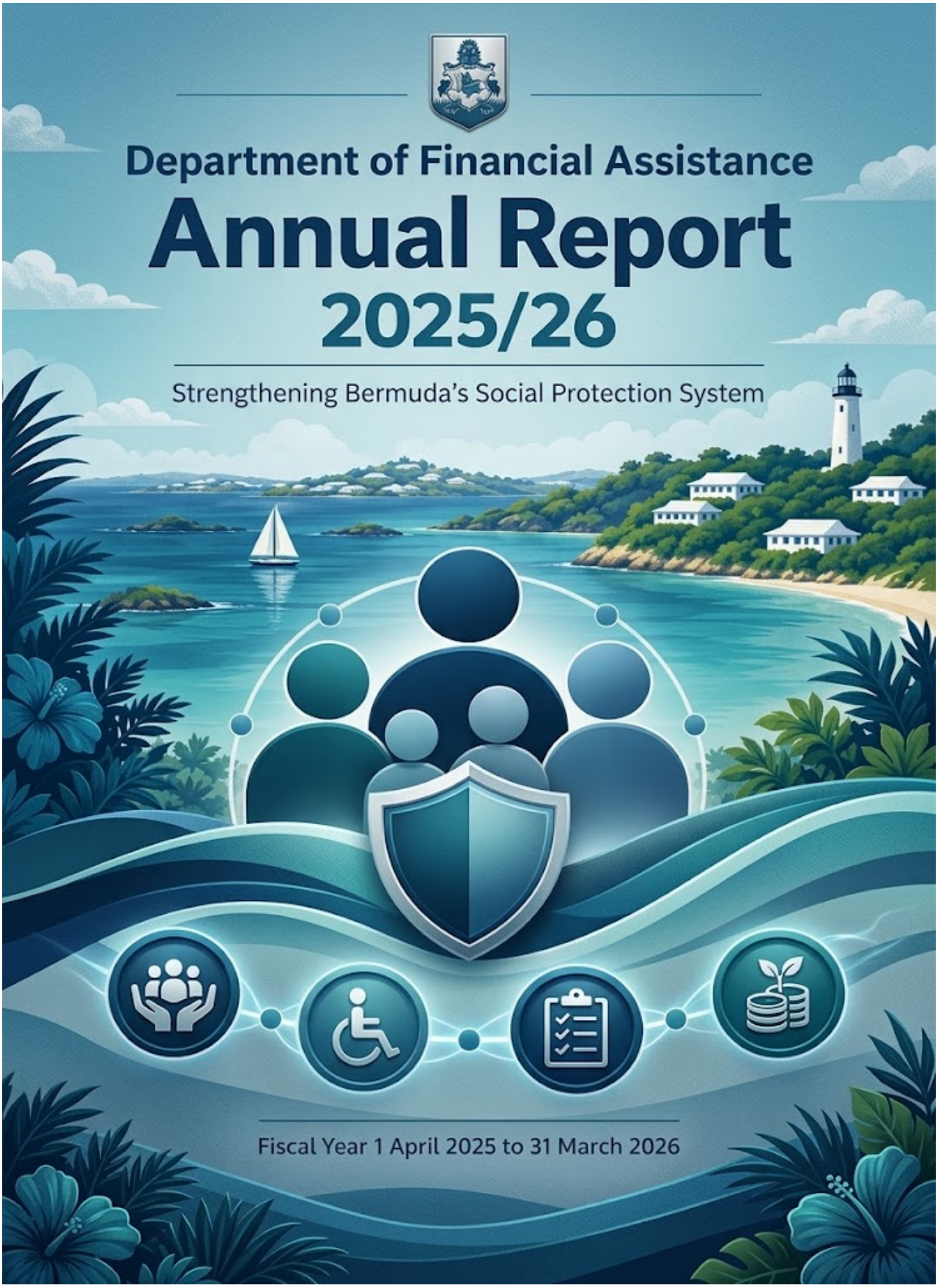

Department of Financial Assistance
Annual Report
2025/26
Strengthening Bermuda's Social Protection System
Fiscal Year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

Executive Summary

The Department of Financial Assistance continued to play a central role in Bermuda's social protection system during FY 2025/26, delivering $52.19 million in support through the Financial Assistance, Child Day Care Allowance and Short-Term Relief Benefit programmes. Demand increased, with average monthly Financial Assistance recipients rising by 3% to 2,045 and children receiving Child Day Care Allowance increasing by 5% to 272 per month. The Department advanced reforms to strengthen support for pensioners and families, introduced a digital Short-Term Relief Benefit application, monitored more than 81,900 transactions, and reduced outstanding debt arising from investigations by 62% to $109,881. It also strengthened fraud detection, staff training, compliance, and inter-agency social work partnerships. Overall, the Department maintained critical support for vulnerable Bermudians while improving accessibility, accountability, programme oversight, and stewardship of public funds.

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Annual Report Overview



Who We Support



Key Legislative and Policy Developments



Performance Measures

The Department is committed to achieving the following performance measures to enhance service delivery and support the effective administration of our programmes.

1 Strengthen Compliance and Financial Controls



Objective

Improve operational, financial and legal compliance functions to enhance efficiency and detect Financial Assistance fraud.

Measure

Reduce recoverable debt from the prior year

Supports effective budget control by addressing fraud, reducing abuse of the system and limiting overpayments.

2 Improve Client Service and Administration



Objective

Apply internationally recognised standards of care in managing relationships with Financial Assistance clients.

Measures

Reduce legitimate client complaints from the prior year

Supports continuous improvement in the delivery of services to clients.

Reduce appeals from the prior year

Supports improved administration of the Financial Assistance Act, Regulations and Policies, while maintaining a mechanism for clients to appeal decisions to revoke or suspend awards.

3 Advance Digital Service Delivery



Objective

Leverage collaboration with other Government departments to advance digitisation and improve service accessibility.

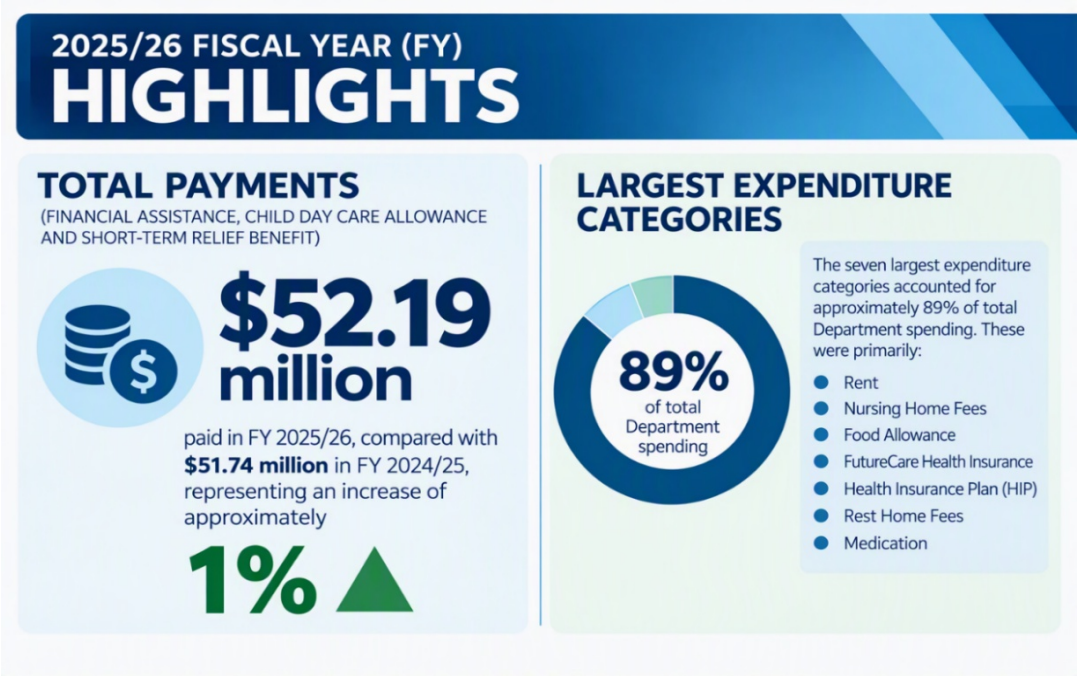
Measure

Continue the introduction of digital Financial Assistance application forms

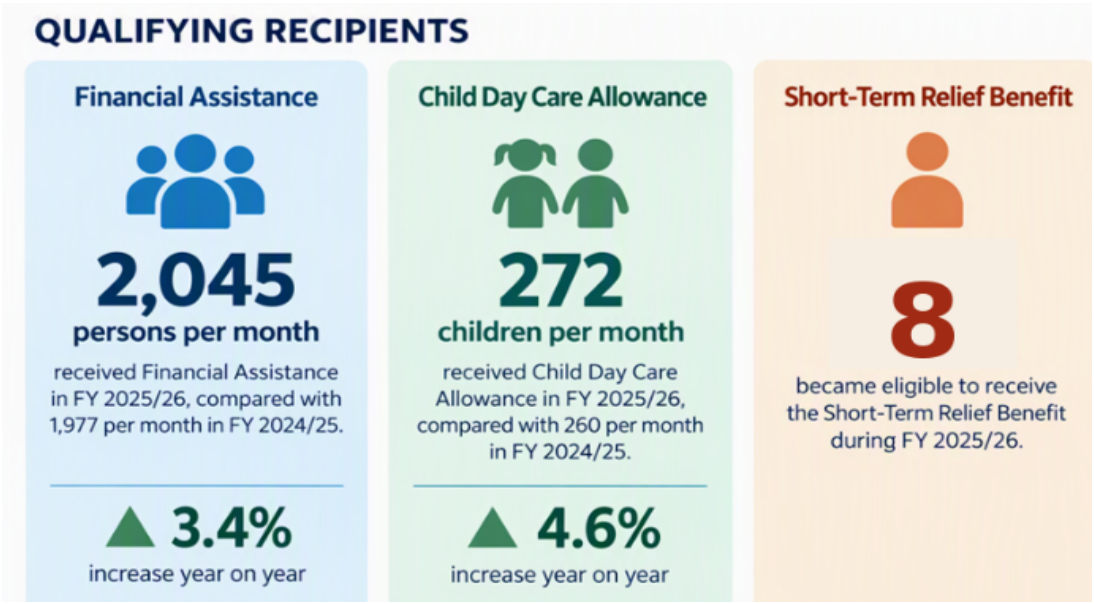
Continue collaboration with the Department of Information and Digital Technology to introduce secure and accessible digital application forms, while strengthening the Department's data analytics and risk management capabilities.

2025/26 Fiscal Year Highlights

Total Payments



Number of Qualifying Recipients

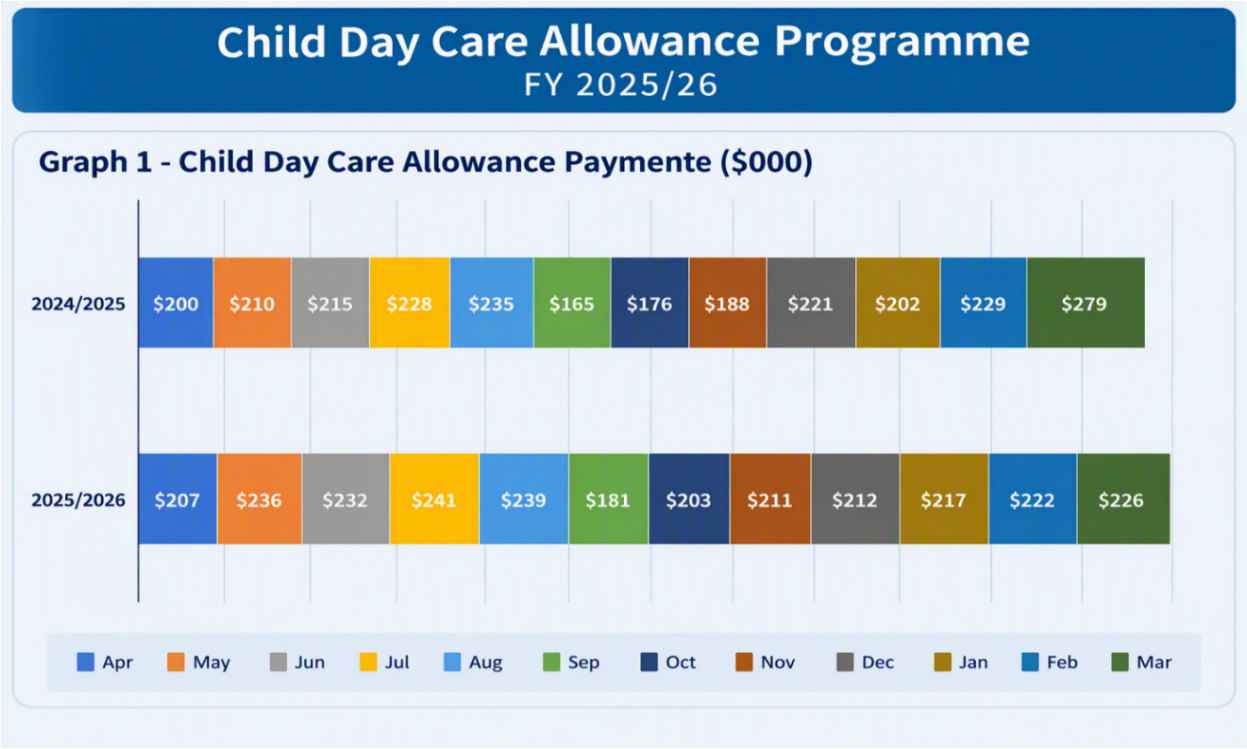


Transaction Monitoring and Investigations



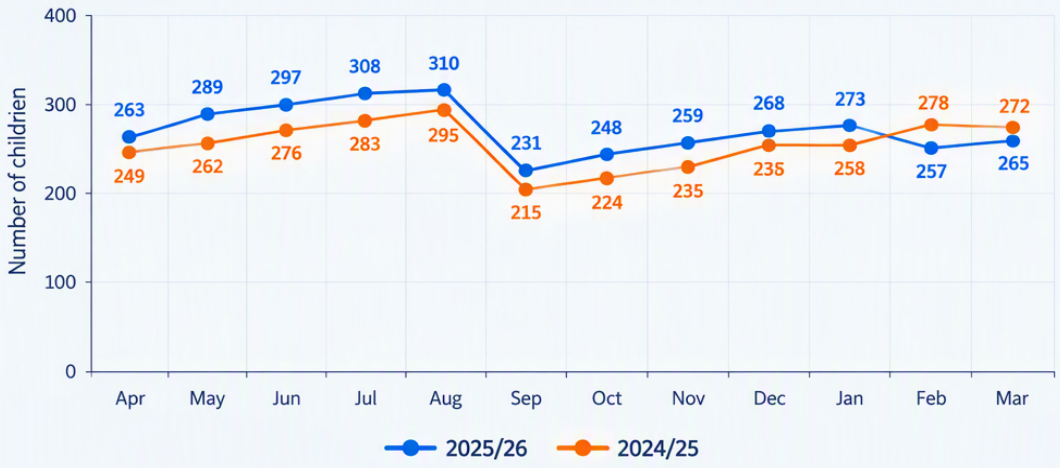
CHILD DAY CARE ALLOWANCE PROGRAMME

Child Day Care Allowance Expenditure

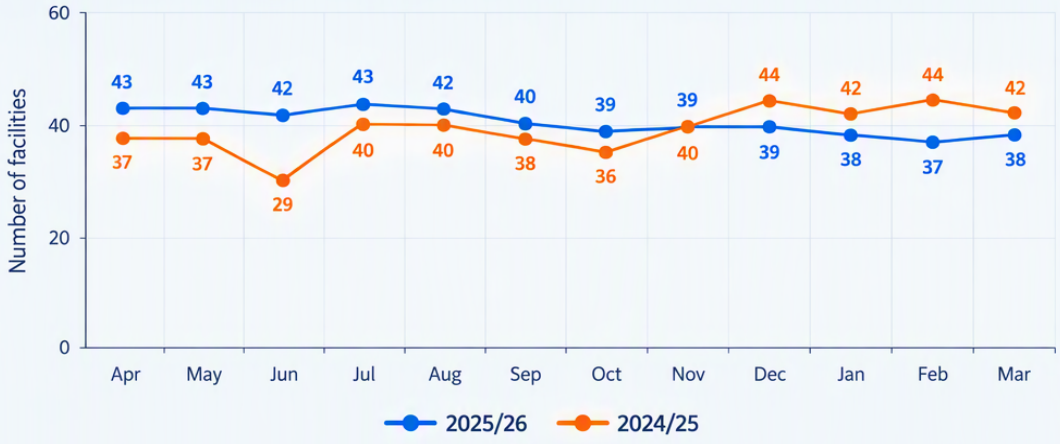


Child Day Care Allowance Programme
FY 2025/26

Graph 2 - Number of Children on Child Day Care Allowance



Graph 3 - Number of Licensed Day Care/Home Facilities Used by Clients



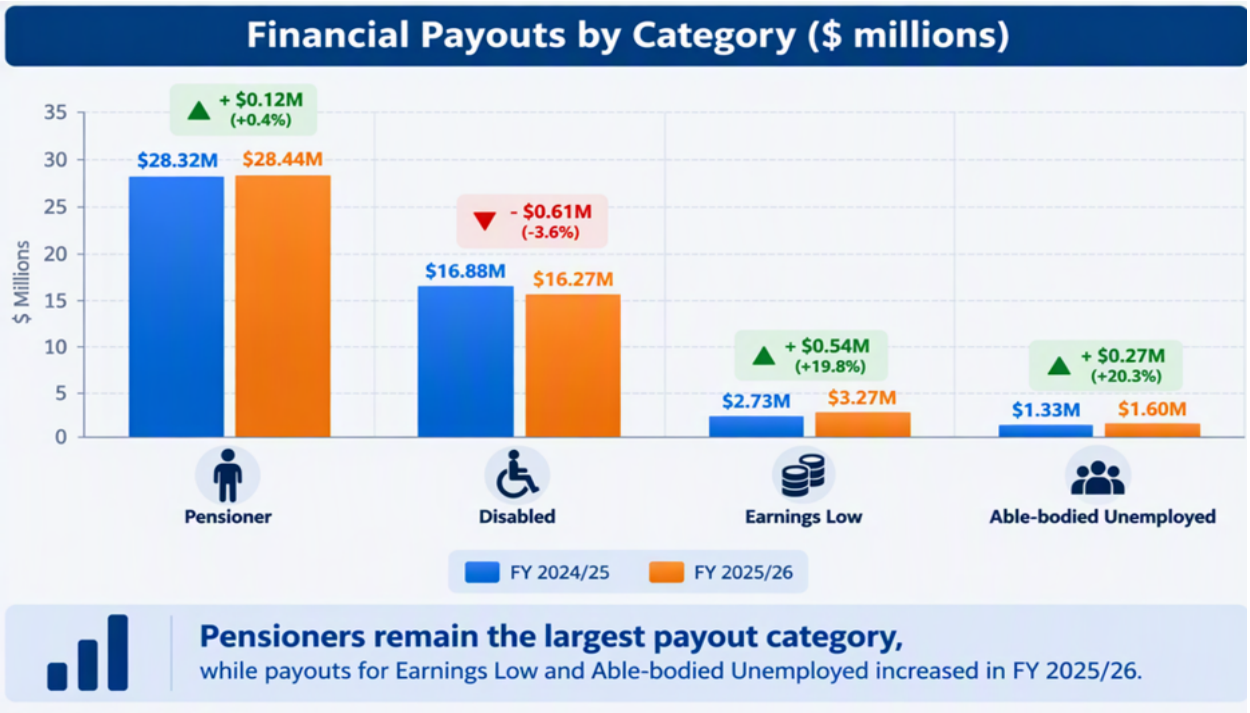


Source: Child Day Care Allowance Programme Data

Financial Assistance Programme

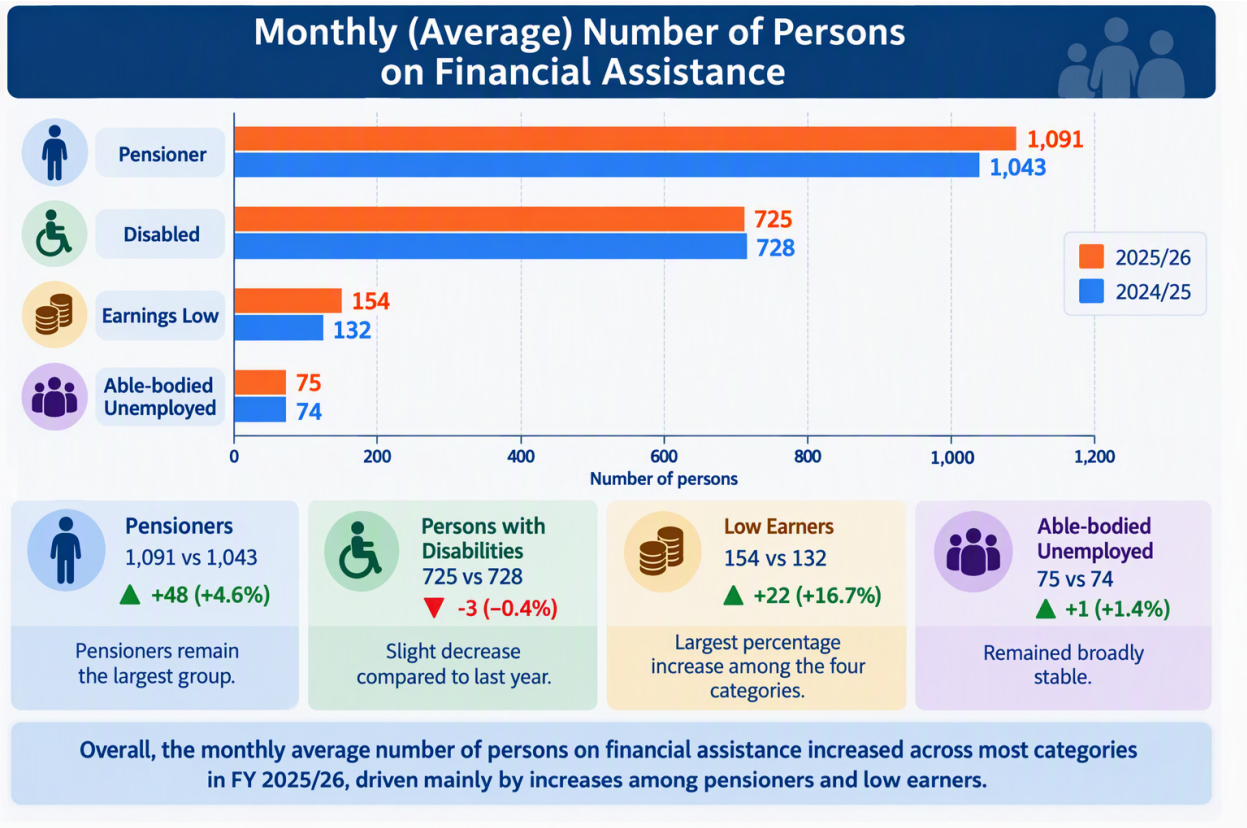
Financial Assistance Payouts to Categories of Qualifying Recipients

Total expenditure for the Financial Assistance Programme was $49.58 million in FY 2025/26. This represented an increase of 1% or $0.32 million from the prior FY 2024/25 ($49.26 million). The year-on-year increase was primarily attributable to Financial Assistance Reform measures, including amendments to the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004. These amendments such as the increase in excluded income threshold for pension and other benefits from $500 to $800, resulted in increased financial assistance awards received by clients particularly within the pensioner and disability categories, which collectively represent the largest proportion of Financial Assistance recipients.



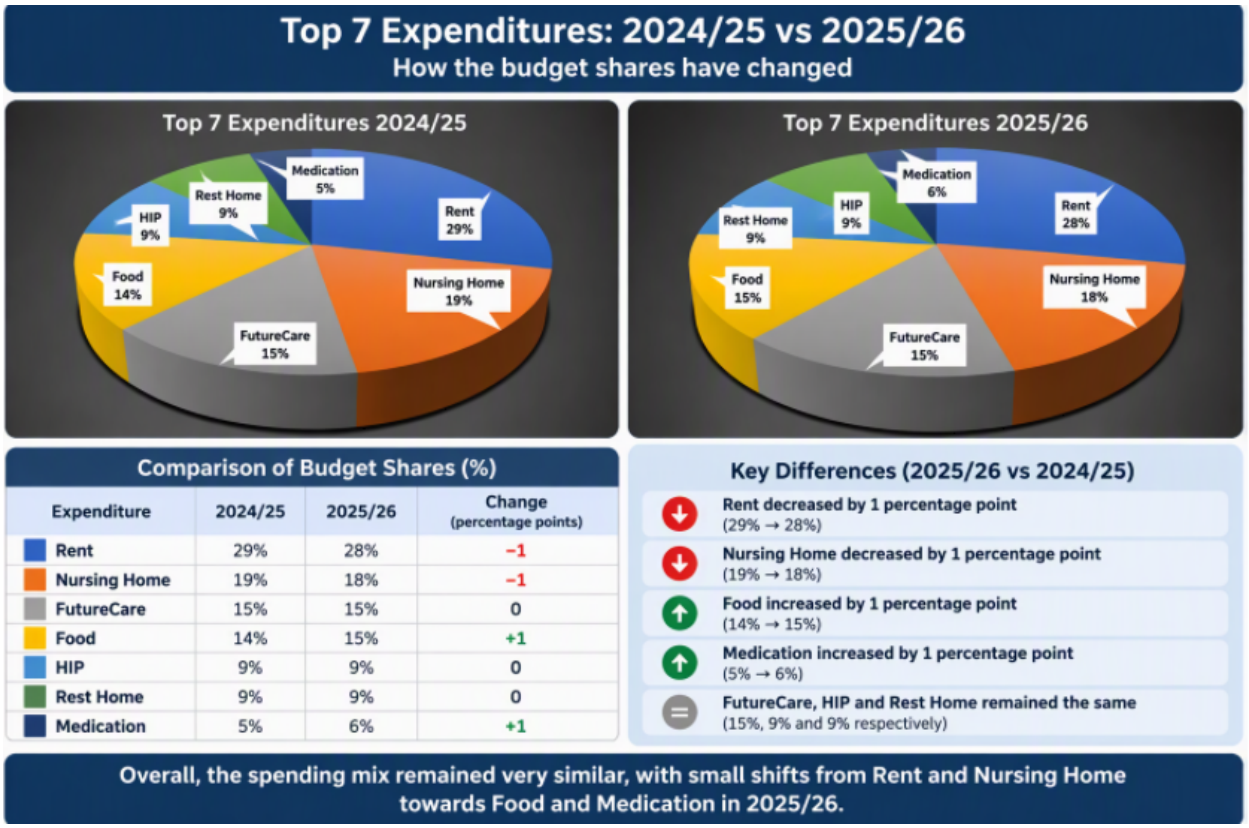
Categories of Qualifying Recipients

During FY 2025/26 the monthly average number of persons receiving financial assistance was 2,045 compared to 1,977 persons during FY 2024/25. The 3% increase is mainly attributed to the increase in the number of eligible persons under the categories, “pensioners” (48 persons) and “earning low” (22 persons). The increase in “Earnings Low” clients partly reflects individuals transitioning from the Able-Bodied Unemployed category into employment.



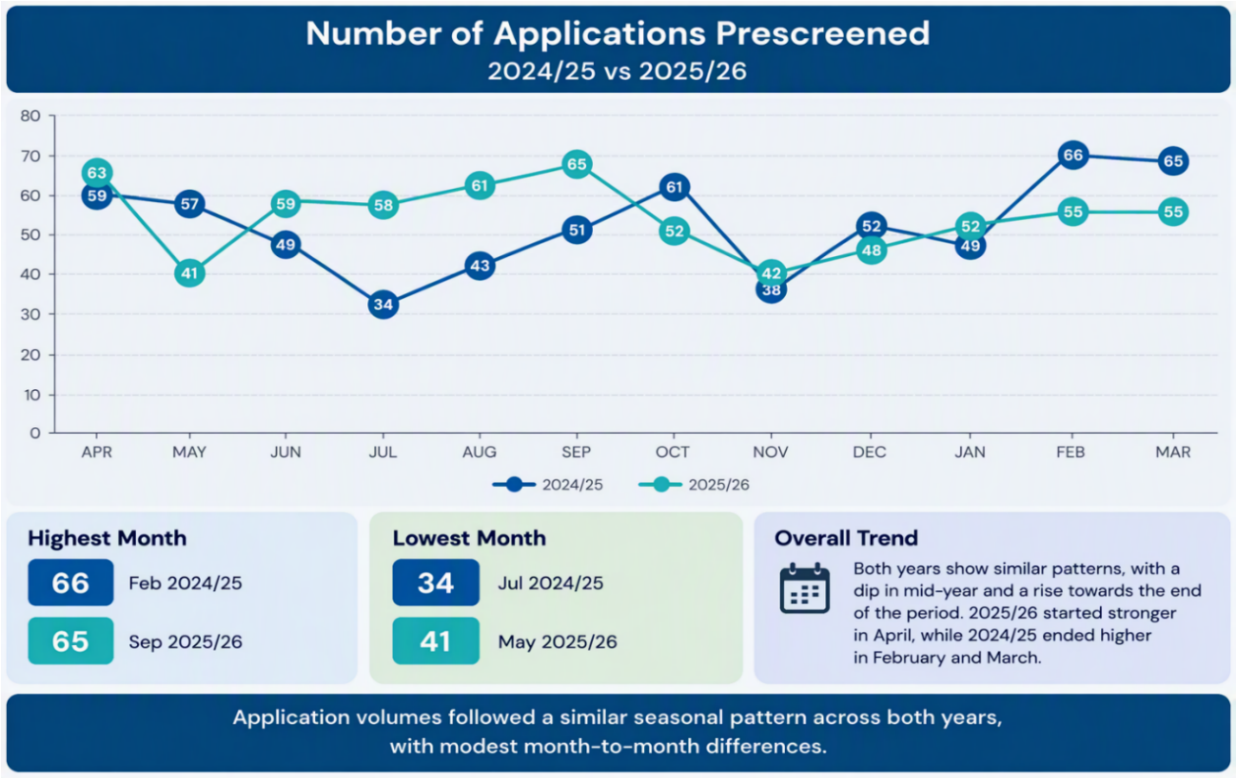
Expenditure Type

The top seven (7) expenditure categories for financial assistance payments remained consistent across both years, ranging from the lowest (6% on medication) to the highest (28% on Rent) during FY 2025/26. The Department of Financial Assistance monitors key expenditure drivers to identify emerging trends, inform opportunities for innovation, and support effective programme management. Analysis of the top seven expenditure categories also provides important evidence-based criteria for informed decision-making and the continued advancement of Financial Assistance Reform.



Number of applications prescreened

The following data pertains to the number of persons who submitted Financial Assistance and Child Day Care Allowance applications for consideration for the two years 2024/25 and 2025/26.

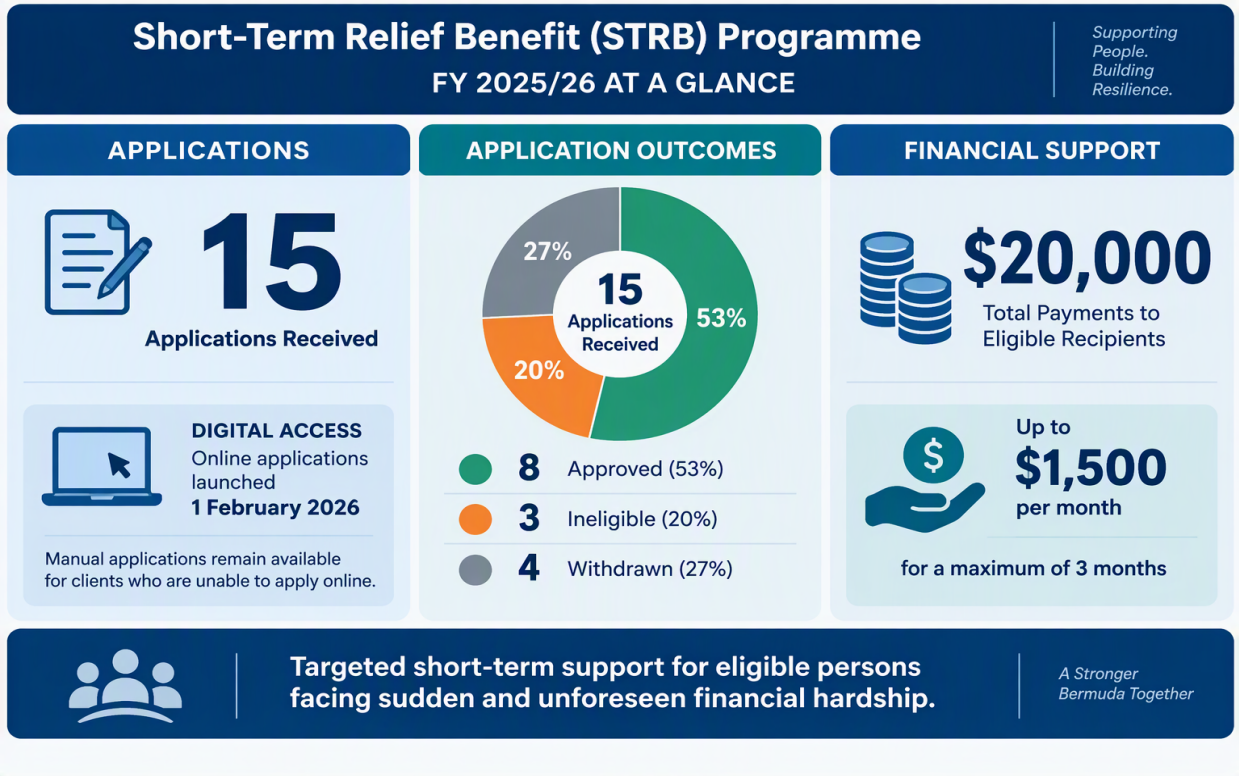


SHORT-TERM RELIEF BENEFIT PROGRAMME

STRB Payouts to Qualifying Recipients

The Department continued to administer the Short-Term Relief Benefit (STRB) Programme, providing eligible recipients with temporary financial assistance for a maximum period of three months, at up to $1,500 per month in accordance with the Financial Assistance (Short-Term Relief Benefit) Act 2024. Effective 1 February 2026, the Department introduced a digital STRB application form, enabling clients to submit applications online and improving accessibility to the Programme. Manual application forms continue to be available for clients who are unable to access or complete the online application.

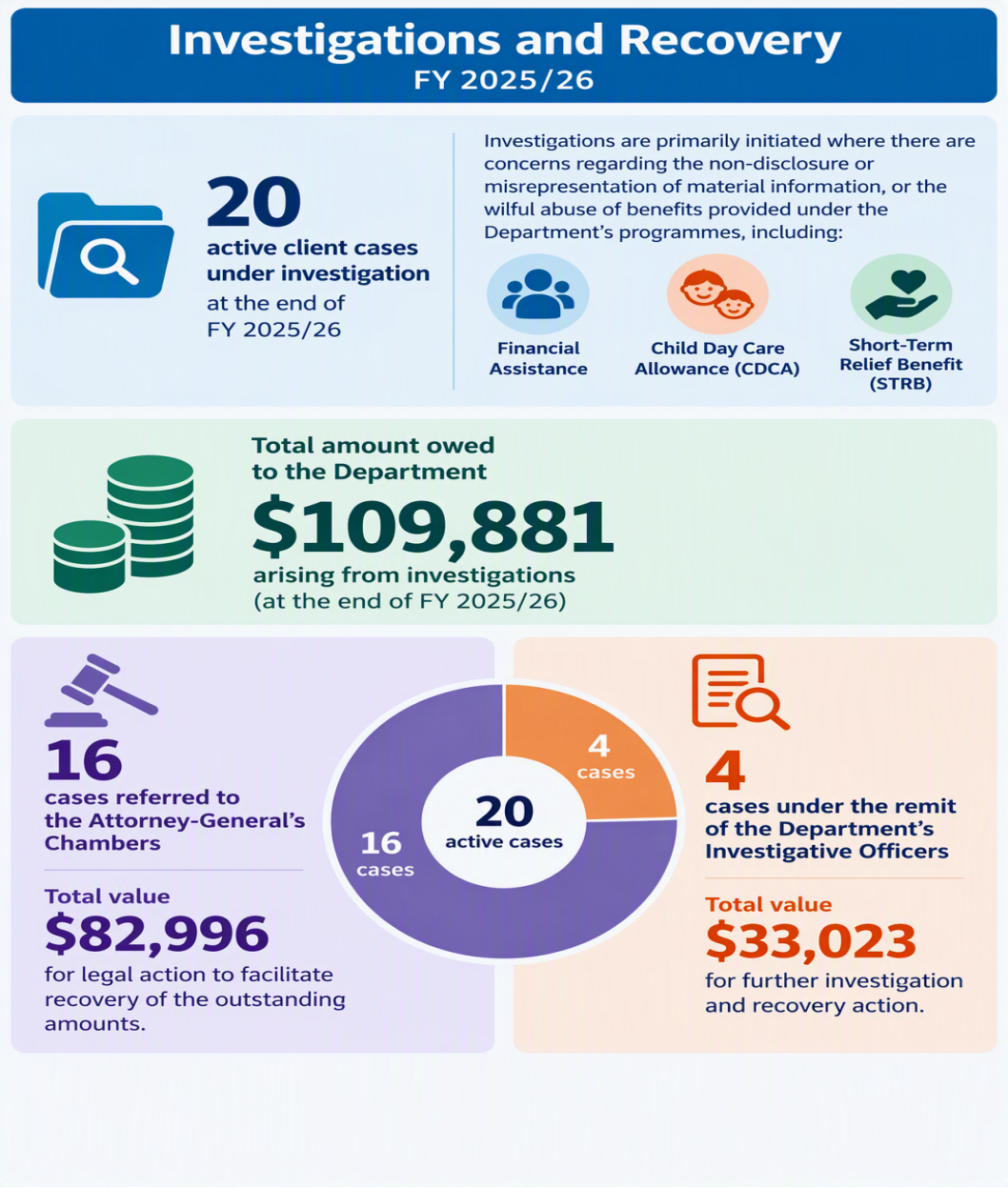
For eligible recipients, the STRB Programme has provided critical short-term financial support during periods of sudden and unforeseen financial hardship. The assistance has helped recipients maintain financial stability and resilience while navigating temporary changes in their circumstances, thereby supporting their continued participation in Bermuda's economy and reducing the uncertainty associated with sudden financial hardship.



TRANSACTION MONITORING, COMPLIANCE, FRAUD AND INVESTIGATIONS

Transaction Monitoring and Compliance

During FY 2025/26, transaction monitoring was performed on 81,905-line transactions in the Financial Assistance System Software (FASS) and the Government JDE E1 System. Transactions were scrutinized for compliance with Department Legislation.



The Department's investigative officers received on average nine (9) tips per month during FY 2025/26. Suspicious activities are brought to the Department's attention via certain channels, such as field investigations, officers' observations and internal findings, together with tips from the public. Primary and secondary data research is conducted within a compliance framework, to assist with evidence gathering.

The Department finalized the documentation of its department-specific fraud typologies and delivered training to all staff. This initiative provides officers with a standardized reference framework to support the identification of fraud patterns, emerging trends, and potential red flags associated with misuse or abuse of the Department's programmes. The initiative is expected to strengthen early detection and prevention measures, reduce the incidence of overpayments, and further promote a consistent culture of compliance and accountability across the Department.

Financial Assistance Social Work

Throughout FY 2025/26, Financial Assistance Social Workers continued to streamline internal processes and improve the Department's social services delivery system. Social workers reinforced and expanded collaborations with government departments and community partners, including King Edward VII Memorial Hospital social workers, Ageing and Disability Services, the Salvation Army, and the Department of Health.

The Department's social workers continued to support case conferences, case discussions, referrals, individual counselling, overseas medical transfers, and site visits to rest and nursing homes. These activities help ensure that Financial Assistance clients are served in safe and healthy environments, receive appropriate services and programming, and benefit from quality care.