

New online register of charities “widens the public’s window” into how charities are run

The charity regulator today launched an improved public register of charities, which makes more information about individual charities available to donors and the public.

The register at www.gov.uk/checkcharity receives over 40 million page views per year. The Charity Commission says the public feel strongly about transparency around where charity money goes and the efficient use of resources by charities, and the register is an important source of information for the public, funders, philanthropists and charities themselves.

Greater transparency

The new display is designed to increase transparency for the public and others by displaying a wider range of information than before.

Where a charity has been held to account by the Commission, ‘regulatory alerts’ on its register entry highlight the specific action taken or underway. The regulator has a range of powers, including to issue official warnings to charities, open statutory inquiries or install interim managers.

Financial information includes the number of staff within a charity that receive total income packages over £60,000, and whether trustees, who are usually volunteers, are paid for their services to the charity. It also highlights income that individual charities receive from government grants and contracts.

The new display also shows whether individual charities work with a professional fundraiser and whether they have specific policies in place, including on safeguarding.

Better service for charities

The new display is also designed to make it easier for trustees to access and update their charity’s information with the Commission, and new data download functions will help sector professionals better analyse information about the charity sector as a whole, including trends and developments in the size and make-up of the sector.

The new tool also allows potential supporters – donors or grant makers – or those thinking of setting up a new charity to search for charities in their area, or to identify charities that promote a certain cause.

A journey of improving the register

While developing the new online register, the Commission undertook user research and learnt from the feedback it received in improving and tweaking the display and functionality of the tool.

The Commission says that it will continue improving the way it makes information about individual charities and the sector as a whole available to the public. As part of that, it welcomes feedback on the new register from members of the public, funders and charities themselves.

The Commission is moving immediately into a second phase of work which will include improvements to its register data sharing. This will allow web and app developers to access and analyse the data or display it on their own websites more easily in line with open data principles, and is part of the Commission's aim for the register to better maximise the benefit charity brings to society.

Helen Stephenson CBE, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said:

Decisions about charitable donations are often very personal, influenced by our own life experiences, and those of our friends and family. But we know that most people share an expectation of openness and transparency from all charities. That's why our new online register increases the range of information available at the click of a button.

Recent months have demonstrated the volunteering spirit of the British public and its generous support for charities. The Commission's online register has an important role to play in ensuring that generosity supports good causes, and we continue to urge people to check the register before donating to be sure that their money is going to a genuine charity. By widening the public's window into how individual charities are run, and how they spend their money, we hope people will also now feel able to make more informed choices about how and where they give.

I also hope that the new register display will encourage charities to continue to respond to growing public expectations around transparency and accountability. We know the public expect the way charities go about their work to be consistent with the spirit of charity, and the new mirror we are holding up to the sector should help charities respond to those expectations.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the registrar and regulator of charities in

England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society. The Commission is an independent, non-ministerial government department.

2. The new information about high pay in charities (packages upwards of £60k per year) is drawn from data submitted by charities in their annual returns to the Commission following consultation with the charity sector.
3. The new functionality of the online register display helps respond to public expectations about charity, [highlighted in recent research](#) which found that people across society expect that:

- a high proportion of charities' money is used for charitable activity
- charities are making the impact they promise to make
- the way they go about making that impact is consistent with the spirit of 'charity'.