

Press release: Commission opens consultation on 'more dynamic' annual return

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today announced a [consultation for next year's annual return](#). This consultation is the second part of a two-year project that is reviewing the key information that we collect and display from charities.

The annual return is a key regulatory tool that is used for two main purposes. It enables the Commission to collect information about charities that it can use to identify issues of concern, either in specific charities or areas of broader risk across the charity sector. It is also the source of much of the information that is displayed on the Register of Charities – a key driver to allow the public and donors to find out more information about charities.

The Commission's intention is to shift to a more dynamic annual return, that is better targeted and easier to use for charities – those charities that are smaller and have more simple operating structures will answer fewer questions, whereas those that are larger and more complex will be required to answer more.

The consultation also proposes some changes to the questions that are being asked, including the addition of some new questions and the removal of others. These changes will help ensure that the questions reflect the priority risk areas in our strategic plan and help us tackle new regulatory risks as they emerge, we also hope they will strengthen the sector's accountability and provide information that the public and others expect to be able to see.

For each new question we have considered how the information will help meet a regulatory aim and further our statutory function. However, we are also mindful of balancing these needs with the need not to create an undue additional burden on charities.

Further changes made to the service itself, in line with the improvements across our digital services, will mean that the annual return is easy-to-use and intuitive for charities regardless of their size and structure.

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

The annual return is an essential regulatory tool for the Commission, but also a window for the public to see important information about charities. Ensuring that we are collecting the

right information, in a way that is simple for charities to understand, is absolutely vital.

We believe the changes that are proposed will help strengthen our ability to regulate charities and improve public trust and confidence. The improved digital service being offered will also result in a much easier service to use that is based on the needs of charities. The voice of charities and their umbrella bodies will be important to inform our approach and we look forward to engaging widely and constructively in the coming weeks.

We are keen to hear from charities that complete the annual return, as well as users of our online register and those that have an interest in the information we collect and publish about charities. You can respond to this consultation by completing an online survey and supplementary information can be provided by email. The final deadline for responses is 5pm on Friday 24 November 2017.

There will also be other opportunities and methods for giving us your feedback, including round table discussions with interested parties and user-testing of the proposed questions, we will publish details of these through the consultation period.

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).