

Press release: Regulator pleased with charities' engagement with consultation on next annual return

The Charity Commission says it is pleased with the engagement it has had with charities as part of its [consultation on the Annual Return for 2018](#).

The regulator has to date received 192 responses to the consultation, which concludes on Friday (24th), and has engaged with a further 70 charities as part of targeted user testing of the new system.

This saw the Commission identifying groups of charities most likely to be affected by proposed changes and proactively seeking their help in testing the new digital system that supports the Annual Return. The testing was conducted by individuals who will be responsible for completing the annual return on behalf of their charities.

The Commission says that this testing is a vital way of assessing the practical impact of new questions, including to what extent they represent an additional regulatory burden.

The regulator also held round-table discussions with groups of charities likely to be affected by proposed changes, such as charities with links overseas.

The Commission is yet to conduct a full analysis of consultation responses, but says that early indications are that the feedback is largely positive, with some users pointing to practical issues in responding to proposed new question areas.

David Holdsworth, Registrar of Charities for England and Wales and Deputy Chief Executive at the Charity Commission, says:

Over the past 12 weeks, we have, for the first time, combined modern digital user testing with more traditional consultation methods to achieve better quality engagement than ever before in an Annual Return consultation.

The user testing has enabled those who would complete any future return to test how easy it is to complete and to notify us of any practical issues that they encountered.

As a result of this approach, we have received an extensive range of constructive feedback and responses about our proposed changes

to the annual return and the digital service that supports it. I'm very pleased with this level of engagement and the information we've gathered during the consultation gives us a sound evidence base as we develop the annual return for 2018.

We're already beginning to analyse the responses and will take on board the feedback we receive. I encourage charities that have not yet had their say on the new annual return questions to do so before the consultation comes to a close this Friday

The regulator says it will publish a full analysis of consultation responses before the end of February 2018; it expects to make the new Annual Return available during the first half of 2018.

All charities with annual incomes of over £10,000 are required to complete an Annual Return, and the regulator has been consulting on a new, more dynamic system for 2018, which will be more targeted and easier to use for charities. As part of the new system, smaller charities and those with simpler operations will be required to answer fewer questions. The Commission has also proposed new question areas.

Ends