

Publications scheme

Setting out information that the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland makes available to stakeholders on a routine basis



The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is the regulator of charities in Northern Ireland, a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Social Development.

Our vision

To deliver in partnership with other key stakeholders in the charitable sector “a dynamic and well governed charities sector in which the public has confidence, underpinned by the Commission’s effective delivery of its regulatory role.”

Further information about our aims and activities is available on our website www.charitycommissionni.org.uk

Equality

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is committed to equality and diversity in all that we do.

Accessibility

The Commission’s website has been designed to W3C standards of accessibility and includes a number of features to enhance accessibility for a wide range of individuals. These include colour contrast and resize options. Materials may be made available in alternative formats on request. If you have any accessibility requirements please contact us.

Online or in print

If you are viewing this document online, you will be able to navigate your way around by clicking on links either within the contents page or text.

Please check our website www.charitycommissionni.org.uk to make sure you’re using the latest versions of forms and guidance.

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Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which has been approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The purpose of a publication scheme is to ensure that key information is made available to stakeholders without the need for a specific request and to provide a centralised guide to the range of information that is available. The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission) aims to publish information unless it is properly considered to be private. You will find that most of the information contained in the Commission's scheme is free to download from our website. The Commission's website is updated on a regular basis and has inbuilt accessibility features which aim to ensure that it is accessible to the greatest number of people. Requests for information in alternative formats will be considered by the Commission on a case by case basis.

Our *Publication scheme* lists the type of information published under the following headings:

- Who we are and what we do
- What we spend and how we spend it
- What our priorities are and how we are doing
- How we make decisions
- Our policies and procedures
- Lists and registers
- The services we offer.

1. Who we are and what we do

This section explains where to find information about the Commission's organisational structure, governance, partnerships, its location and ways to contact us. In line with ICO expectations, only current information will be available here.

The Commission was established by the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 (the Charities Act) as the independent regulator of charities in Northern Ireland. Using the [About us](#) tab of the Commission's website you will find information about who we are and what we do. Here you will find links to an organisational map of the Commission's structure and information on the Board of Commissioners and senior management team. You will also find information relating to the Commission's legal status as a non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Social Development (DSD). The [About us](#) section also has a number of tags which link to more information about the Commission. For example, the [About the Charity Commission](#) page sets out information on the vision, aims and values of the Commission.

Section 24 of the Charities Act grants the Commission power to share information with other public bodies to enable it or them to fulfil their functions. The [other regulators](#) tag links to information about the organisations with which the Commission has relationships. This includes other charity regulators and other government agencies with which the Commission has developed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and service level agreements. The details of these arrangements are not published as much of the information contained is

sensitive and its publication could jeopardise the future sharing of information or put the effectiveness of operations at risk. A list of these bodies is set out in the Commission's *Business plans*.

As not all parts of the Charities Act have come into force yet, the Commission has provided a user friendly copy of *the Charities Act* showing which parts are already in operation. This will be added to as new provisions are commenced.

Under the *Manage your charity* tab of the website you will find information relating to how functions of the Commission impact on charities.

At the *Contact us* section you will find an enquiry form which you can use to contact the Commission. You will also find the Commission's address and telephone, textphone and fax numbers.

2. What we spend and how we spend it

This section explains where to find financial information relating to the Commission's projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement and contracts. There are also links to information on expenses and allowances and pay and grading structures. In line with ICO expectations, current financial audit and financial information is available along with information from the previous two financial years. Below is an overview of the Commission's financial activities, details of which are published in the accounts section of the Commission's *Annual reports* which are available on the Commission website.

The Commission is funded by the Department for Social Development (DSD) through grant-in-aid, with statutory provision for income from fines and taxes, sale of goods, interest earned, and gifts and bequests. At present the Commission does not raise finance in any of these ways. Annual expenditure is monitored by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit for each financial year is also available in the accounts section of the Commission's *Annual reports*.

The procurement and tendering procedures which govern the Commission's acquisition of goods and services, and the expenditure limits attaching to these, are detailed in the *Management Statement and Financial Memorandum* (MSFM). Information about procurement and tendering procedures is contained in the approved Financial Procedures Manual which will be published on the website.

Information about Commission projects and activities, and associated projected and actual expenditure, are also detailed in the *minutes of Board meetings*. Ad hoc reports on major events and consultations, including financial information, may also be produced from time to time and published on our website.

Information concerning travel and subsistence costs to which staff and Commissioners are entitled can be found in the Travel and subsistence policy.

An explanation of the Commission's internal structures, including information on the pay grading of the senior management team, is provided in the *About us* section of the website. The Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) website

www.nidirect.gov.uk/the-northern-ireland-civil-service gives broad information on grade equivalents. Further information about the governance of the Commission is available within the Corporate Governance framework.

Information about current vacancies is provided in the *Job opportunities* section of the Commission's website.

The Commission's annual accounts are inspected by the Northern Ireland Audit Office and a summary of audit findings is included in the Commission's *Annual reports*.

3. What are our priorities and how are we doing

This section explains where to find information about the Commission's priorities and how it is performing against plans to achieve those priorities.

The Commission publishes a corporate plan on a three year cycle. The first year of the corporate plan is the basis of each annual business plan. These plans are published in the *Annual reports, Corporate and business plans* section of the website.

The corporate and business plans contain key targets. Performance relating to these targets is reported in the Commission's annual report and accounts which are available in the *Annual reports, Corporate and business plans* section of the website. The Commission's performance against the achievement of key objectives is reported to the Board and to the Department for Social Development on a quarterly basis. An Audit & Risk committee also considers summary information about additional performance reviews. Information about performance is available in the *Audit & Risk minutes* and *minutes of Board meetings* which are available on the website.

Information about the Commission's service standards and performance are available as part of the *Annual report*.

Under the Charities Act there are a number of obligations on DSD to make regulations and orders related to the Commission's statutory powers. As regulations are made and sections of the Charities Act are commenced the Commission produces guidance, a list of which is available as part of the *Charity essentials* page on the website.

When required, the Commission provides information to DSD to assist in preparing responses to Parliamentary and Assembly questions about the work of the Charity Commission. These are available on the www.niassembly.gov.uk website and on the www.parliament.uk website. Other information is provided to the Assembly on the implementation of the Charities Act as and when it is required. This is available on the Northern Ireland Assembly website at www.niassembly.gov.uk.

Value-For-Money (VFM) examinations into the way the Commission has used its resources in discharging its functions may be carried out by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland. The Commission publishes a summary of

any VFM reports considered by the Audit & Risk committee in the *Audit & Risk minutes* available on the website.

The Commission is committed to equality in all of our work. Our equality obligations and commitments are set out in an equality scheme and action plan which is available on the *Equality* page of the Commission's website alongside quarterly screening reports.

4. How we make decisions

This section explains where to find information about how the Commission makes decisions and how it records these decisions. Decisions are made in areas including:

- Registration, for example, the decision to register a charity
- Casework, for example, the decision to grant a consent to a charity
- Compliance, for example, the decision to open a non-compliance case
- Monitoring, for example the decision to select a charity for enhanced monitoring testing
- Enquiries, for example, the decision to open a regulatory investigation.

Where the Commission makes a decision using authority granted under the Charities Act the decision may be published on the *Decisions of the Commission* page on the Commission's website. The *Publishing our decisions* policy outlines how the Commission decides which decisions to publish.

The Commission does not publish the minutes of its regulatory decision making or operational manuals as this may impact on the integrity of our work. However, guidance available on the website, sets out the process the Commission follows in reaching decisions and the results of the Commission's work can also be found in the *Thematic reports* that have been published. The range of guidance and thematic reports can be found in the *Charity essentials* section of the website.

Major policy decisions are made by the Commission's Board on the recommendation of senior management team. Information about these decisions is included in the *minutes of Board meetings* which are uploaded to the Commission's website, two weeks after approval. Information about Commission policies is also available in the *Annual reports, Corporate and business plans* section of the website.

Information about Commission decisions is available on the following sections of the website:

- *Accounting and reporting*
- *Charity essentials*
- *Equality reports*
- *Public consultation*
- *Statutory reports*

The Commission's approved *Participation strategy* is also available on the website. This sets out how the Commission consults with stakeholders,

publishes the findings of consultations and uses these findings to inform the processes and guidance associated with key decision making processes. These are published in the *Public consultations* section of the website.

5. Policies and procedures

This section explains where to find information about current Commission written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering services and responsibilities.

Information about the Commission's policy on standards for the provision of services can be found at the *Customer service standards* page on the website. The customer charter also sets out the standards we expect when you engage with our staff. There is a closed circuit television system (CCTV) in use at the Commission's office. This is used to create a safer working environment for staff and as part of the procedures to keep the building and its contents secure.

In the *About us* section of the website the Commission has published policies on:

- *Freedom of Information requests*
- *Data protection information*
- *Records retention and management*
- *Information security*

Under the *Manage your charity* section the Commission has published information and guidance on changes to charities which may require the approval of the Commission.

6. Lists and registers

The Commission is required to maintain the *Register of Charities*. The *register of charities* is available on the Commission's website. Any personal information gathered as part of the registration process is managed according to data protection principles. The Commission also holds and publishes a *register of removed trustees* which provides details of anyone who has been removed as a trustee by the Commission or the High Court.

The Commission publishes information from the capital asset registers in its *Annual reports* which are available on the website.

The Commission annually collates brief information about any gifts and hospitality offered to Board and senior management team members, whether accepted or declined. Information is reported in the *Audit & Risk minutes* which are on the website. The Commission's approved *Gifts & Hospitality policy* is available on the website.

A *register of interests* is available on the Commission's website.

A list of the published *decisions of the Commission* is available on the website.

7. The services we offer

This section explains where to find current information about the services the Commission provides. The Commission regulates Northern Ireland charities and provides a range of charity-related guidance and information. Copies of this guidance are available in various sections of the Commission's website:

- [About us](#)
- [Charity essentials](#)
- [Manage your charity](#)
- [Our regulatory work](#)

Media information is provided in the [Latest News](#) section on the home page of the Commission's website.

8. Provision for revision of the approved policy

Effective accountability and governance arrangements are essential to ensure the proper management and control of information. The Commission's *Publication Scheme* will be managed in line with the various oversight roles and responsibilities that the Commission currently operates and has in place.

The Senior Information Risk Officer (Head of Corporate Services) will, as part of the annual corporate business planning process, consider the appropriateness of the approved *Publication Scheme*. If there are any changes in the Commission's functions, duties and powers, the approved *Publication scheme* will be reviewed and revised as necessary.

Further information on our activities is available from:

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