

Customer charter

Our service standards



Who we are and what we do

Who are we?

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was established in June 2009 to deliver the legislative requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. The Act sets out what organisations must do to become charities, what obligations charities have to us, and details our powers and responsibilities.

What do we do?

We are responsible for determining whether an institution is or is not a charity, maintaining a public *register of charities*, identifying and investigating apparent misconduct or mismanagement within charities, and promoting

compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations.

We aim to promote:

- public trust and confidence in charities
- awareness and understanding of the application of public benefit.
- trustee compliance with their legal obligations
- the effective use of charitable resources
- the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries and the public.

Who do we work with?

We work with the general public, with charities, and also a wide range of public bodies and other regulators.

Our service standards

We aim to provide the highest possible standards and quality of service to all of our customers and stakeholders. We welcome feedback on our approach and are committed to continuous improvement.

All Commission processes have their own standards for service and turnaround in addition to the Commission's broad service standards set out below. These can be found in the relevant guidance documents published on our website which are listed in this document at Appendix 1.

On the phone:

General telephone enquiries are managed by NI Direct on behalf of the Commission. NI Direct aims to answer 85% of calls received within 20 seconds.

When a call is transferred, we will:

- answer your call promptly
- Identify ourselves by name and Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
- be professional and polite
- take an accurate message if the person you are trying to reach is unavailable
- direct you to the right person
- answer your query immediately or advise you of a timeline for answering more complex matters
- provide an answer phone option if we are not available
- listen to you

When you write a letter to us we will:

- acknowledge/respond to you within 10 working days. This may not be possible during peak periods when large numbers of charities are filing their annual monitoring returns
- reply with clear and relevant information
- advise you of any delays in responding to your query and provide a reason
- respond to requests for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts

- enter your letter into our postal log and keep a record of your correspondence.

When you email us we will:

- we will adhere to the same standards as for a letter
- reply using a personal signature.
- We will use a generic email signature when:
 - sending out general correspondence to a large number of people
 - where any member of Commission staff can deal with a query in its initial stages or
 - where any member of Commission staff can follow up on a query or ongoing issue.

When you have an appointment with us we will:

- welcome you and make sure you are comfortable
- be punctual, polite and professional
- take account of your communication and accessibility needs

If you are unhappy with our service we will:

- provide an effective complaints process and guidance
- respond to your complaint in full within 20 working days
- advise you of any delays in responding to your complaint and provide a reason

- take account of and learn from your feedback
- be transparent, open and honest

When we make a decision we will:

- act in accordance with our objectives, general functions and duties as set out in sections 7-10 of the Act.
- advise you of our reasoning
- provide you with information on our complaints and appeal processes
- communicate clearly and timely
- be transparent, open and honest
- signpost you to another body if appropriate

When we issue guidance we will:

- ensure it is clear, reliable, relevant and up-to-date
- take account of your communication and accessibility needs
- ensure it is accessible to you taking your needs into account
- ask for your views and listen to them

When you access our website or social media we will:

- provide relevant, up-to-date information that is easily understood and accessible
- post relevant, up-to-date information on our social media platforms that encourage interaction and feedback
- continue to review our web-based and social media platforms to further engage and connect with you and provide additional online self service facilities and tools.

Customers with particular needs



We have installed induction loops in our office and a TextPhone facility is available if you wish to contact us using that particular method. All of our guidance is available on our website, which is text reader compatible, and can be printed in large text. We can make our guidance available in alternative formats on request, for example Braille, other languages.

Please contact us if you have any special requirements. Our contact details are listed at the end of this document.



Talking to you

Feedback

It is important we receive comments and feedback from all our customers and stakeholders.

This will help us to improve our services and ensure we are responsive to your needs.

We will carry out regular surveys to gauge your satisfaction with the service we have provided to you, in addition your comments are welcome at any time by contacting us individually.

Complaints

We are committed to providing the best service we can. If you want to complain we will ensure your complaint is treated seriously and fairly.

You can do this in writing or by completing our online complaints form, available on our website at <http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/about-us/making-a-complaint/complaints-about-our-service-form>.

We aim to respond fully to your complaint within 20 working days, and will investigate all complaints thoroughly.

Further details on our *Complaints about service* can be obtained on our website:

http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/About_us/Complaining/Complaint_about_our_service



What we expect from you

We expect you to:

- provide us with any information we request from you, within the time specified
- be realistic when you apply to, or make a request of us. We are a small team and will make every effort to deal with your application or request as quickly and efficiently as possible
- send any queries to us in a timely manner, particularly if they relate to your annual monitoring return. An unanswered query with the Commission is not a valid reason for failure to file your annual monitoring return on time
- afford our staff the same level of courtesy that you expect from us.
- be professional, honest and open with us at all times
- provide us with feedback which may help us to improve the service which we provide
- As our offices are not public offices and staff have work commitments, unscheduled callers will be advised to seek an appointment.

Dealing with unacceptable behaviour from members of the public

The Commission expects its staff to be able to conduct their business in a safe and non-threatening environment.

The Commission does not view actions or behaviour as unacceptable simply because a complainant is assertive or determined. We also understand that individuals may act out of character in times of difficulty or distress. However unacceptable behaviour from members of the public will not be tolerated and the Commission may take action, including legal action where appropriate.

General telephone enquiries to the Commission are managed by NI Direct and monitored according to NI Direct's *Call Recording and Quality Monitoring Guidance*.

What do we mean by unacceptable behaviour?

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Any act of written or verbal abuse, including those of a discriminatory nature

- Threatening behaviour
- Intimidation
- Vexatious, unreasonable or excessively persistent complaining
- Serious or persistent harassment
- Swearing or the use of foul language
- Rudeness including derogatory remarks
- Inappropriate cultural, racial or religious references

In response to challenging or unacceptable behaviour the Commission may place restrictions on how it communicates with an individual. These restrictions will be proportionate to the behaviour or incident in question. Restrictions may be imposed in response to isolated incidents or to an accumulation of challenging behaviour over time.

Examples of restrictions which the Commission may impose include, but are not limited to:

- Terminating a telephone call where the individual continues to be abusive, offensive or

aggressive, following a request to stop.

- Limiting telephone contact from the individual to specific days/times.
- Restricting contact to a single, named member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence.
- Restricting contact to written correspondence only.
- Respond to emails using a generic email signature
- Refuse to deal with the individual except through a third party, for example a solicitor or designated advocate acting on their behalf.

If an individual's persistent or vexatious behaviour is consistently directed at an individual member of staff and they feel threatened as a result of this, the Commission's Senior Management Team may refer the matter to the PSNI.

Contacting us

Email

The best way to contact us is by email via:
admin@charitycommissionni.org.uk

Telephone

If you need to speak to someone over the phone you can call us on 028 3832 0220 or TextPhone on 028 3834 7639 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, except public holidays.

Post

Email is the easiest, cheapest and quickest way for you to contact us. We ask you if at all possible not to write to the Commission,

but to email us instead. If you are unable to use email you can write to us at the following address:

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
257 Lough Road
Lurgan
Craigavon
BT66 6NQ

Tel: 028 3832 0220

Fax: 028 3834 5943

TextPhone: 028 3834 7639



Appendix 1

Authorising Transactions Guidance

Making a Complaint about our services

Access to information

Challenging a decision of the Commission

Requesting a scheme

Publishing our decisions

Consents for charitable companies

Registering as a charity in Northern Ireland

Powers for unincorporated charities

Mergers and closures

Changing your charity's name

Participation strategy

Waiving disqualification

How to raise a concern about a charity

Dealing with concerns about charities

Attending formal meetings with the Commission

View all guidance

Freedom of information and data protection

Data protection

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland is responsible for registering, regulating and reporting on the charity sector in Northern Ireland. As the charity regulator, we are lawfully required to collect and process personal data in order to achieve our statutory objectives, functions and general duties.

Any personal data you give us will be held securely and in accordance with data protection rules and principles. Your personal details will be treated as private and confidential, and will only be retained for as long as is necessary in line with our retention policy. The information will be safeguarded and will not be disclosed to anyone not connected to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland unless:

- you have agreed to its release, or
- the Commission is legally bound to disclose the information
- the Commission regards disclosure as necessary in order to properly carry out its statutory functions

The Commission may also disclose information or personal data to other relevant public authorities where it is lawful to do so and where, for the purposes of national security, law enforcement, or other issues of overriding public interest, such disclosure is necessary.

We will ensure that any disclosure made for this purpose is lawful, fair, considers your right to privacy and is made only to serve the Commission's statutory objectives as a regulator.

When you provide the Charity Commission with information used to carry out its functions, you are obliged to abide by section 25 of the *Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008* which means that it is an offence to provide information which is false or misleading. In respect of your personal data we expect any data which you give us to be truthful, accurate and up-to-date.

For further information, you may wish to read the Commission's [Privacy notice](#) which details what to expect when the Commission collects and processes personal information, including your rights in relation to that processing if we hold your information.

Freedom of information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to know about and request information that we hold. This includes information received from third parties. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act we will release it, unless there are relevant exemptions. We may choose to consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, please let us know.