



News

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Why is it so important to file RSIs?

We regularly publish [operational case reports](#), which help us explain what impact our casework has and provide lessons for trustees. We recently published an OCR into a Southwark based charity which had failed to submit a [serious incident report](#) to us after the conviction of an employee for sexual offences against minors. They had also failed to notify Southwark Council, the charity's main funder.

1,280 serious incidents were reported to us in 2013/14, but there

is likely to be under-reporting in this area. Trustees should report serious incidents to us as soon as they suspect them, even if it has already been reported to the police or another regulator. They should also act transparently and actively inform funders and any other interested parties of incidents that may affect the reputation of the charity. This OCR highlighted how failure to do so can result in damage to the charity's reputation, and loss of funding.

Trustees have a general duty to assess and manage risks to their charity's activities, beneficiaries, property, work or reputation. Reporting serious incidents demonstrates to us that they are properly complying with this duty, and their responsibilities as trustees.

Check out this [short report](#) to see what lessons your charity can learn from this case study.

Make sure you read

New [guidance on campaigning and elections](#) published by the Electoral Commission in advance of the Lobbying Act coming into effect on 19 September 2014. The guidance explains the rules of electoral law and charity law so that charities can ensure they comply with the all the relevant legislation in the run-up to elections.

Whilst charities that carry out campaigning and political activity must never engage in party political activity, there may be circumstances when they need to register as non-party campaigners with the Electoral Commission. The Lobbying Act introduces some changes to this requirement, and to the rules that apply if registration is necessary. If your charity carries out campaigns, make sure you read this guidance, as well as [our own](#).

Check out our new podcasts!

We have recently created new podcasts to help trustees understand their duties under charity law.

- ['Beneficiaries as trustees'](#) discusses the benefits of 'user trusteeship' and how our guidance can help foresee and avoid problems that may occur

- ['Managing disputes'](#) looks at a case study of a charity struggling to operate due to an internal dispute, and what our advice and guidance is

Have you read our updated safeguarding guidance?

Trustees of charities which work with vulnerable groups, including children, must always act in their best interests and ensure they take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to them. Having safeguards in place protects and promotes the welfare of children and enhances the confidence of trustees, staff, volunteers, parents/carers and the general public.

We have updated our [Safeguarding children and young people guidance](#). Some of the changes include:

- a revised introduction outlining trustees' legal duties with regard to safeguarding
- an updated section of our regulatory role in safeguarding
- updated information on the Disclosure and Barring Service, which replaced the

Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority

- a new section on 'Charities working directly with children abroad'
- updates to links to current guidance and legislation and to sources of further information and support

Do you know about the new charity accounts framework?

UK accounting standards and practice is changing from 2015. These changes will affect all charities preparing [accruals accounts](#) (also known as SORP accounts), but do not affect charities preparing [receipts and payments accounts](#). It is important that your charity's Treasurer or finance staff familiarise themselves with these changes to see if, and how, your charity will be affected.

All charities preparing accruals accounts will need to follow one of [two new SORPs \(Statements of Recommended Accounting Practice\)](#). The new SORPs

take effect for financial years beginning on or after 1 January 2015. For all previous financial years the current SORP ([SORP 2005](#)), still has to be followed.

The Office of Civil Society is progressing new regulations to enable charities to follow the new SORPs. It is anticipated that these regulations will also be in place for 1 January 2015. For more information, visit the dedicated [SORP micro-site](#). Your auditor or independent examiner should also be able to offer advice.

Are you maintaining public trust and confidence in your charity?

Recent [independent research](#) conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Charity Commission revealed that public trust and confidence in charities remains high, receiving a trust score of 6.7 out of 10 overall. Only the police and doctors are trusted more than charities.

However, the research highlights a shift in public opinion; people are attaching greater importance to good financial management by charities, and 96% said it was important for organisations to provide the public with information on expenditure.

As trustees, there's no room for complacency - it is vital you submit [your accounts and returns](#) within the deadline of 10 months after the end of your financial year. File on time, and keep public trust in your charity high.

Make sure you keep your charity's details updated

Trustees have a legal responsibility to [keep their charity's details up to date](#), and you must tell us about changes to your charity's contacts. Keeping your charity's public register details up to date will help people to find out about your charity, contact you or make a donation.

Not all the information you give us about your charity is published, but it does need to be kept up to date. You should ensure all the trustees of your charity update this [form](#) with their email addresses, to receive important information they need to help run the charity effectively. Trustees will not receive junk mail and individuals' email addresses will not be published. The trustee whose email address is currently listed on this form should encourage the charity's other trustees to add theirs.

Our Annual Report reveals rise in serious casework

Our latest [Annual Report and Accounts](#) show a steep rise in our investigatory casework. We opened 64 statutory inquiries (the highest level of our investigatory work) between April 2013 and March 2014, compared to 15 during the previous financial year. Statutory inquiries are used to investigate the most serious regulatory issues and allow us to use the full range of our legal powers. We also opened 1,865 operational compliance cases.

In the report we also highlight the importance of thinking carefully before setting up a charity, and suggest alternative ways the public can respond

to need, such as working with a local Community Foundation of the Charities Aid Foundation. We approved 4,968 charities for registration in 2013-14, out of 6,661 applications.

The report reveals that 86% of Annual Returns and 86% of annual accounts were filed within deadline by charities in 2013-14. Trustees have ten months after their financial year end to file their annual information - make sure your charity is keeping accountable, and [file on time](#).

Are you aware of the Annual Return 2015 consultation?

We have launched a [consultation](#) on a number of proposals for changes to the Annual Return 2015, following previous consultations which informed changes to the Annual Returns 2013 and 2014.

We have continued to focus on that information we need to collect and make publicly available. Our aim is not to increase the burden on charities, but to continue to be able to regulate charities effectively, as well as increasing

transparency and accountability and responding to the growing public appetite for information.

Proposals include:

- to ask charities with incomes between £10,000 and £500,000 and all [CIOs](#) with an income under £500,000 to provide some financial information, including on income and expenditure. Currently, only charities with incomes over £500,000 are required to provide this

- additional questions concerning amount spent on campaigning activity and on income received from public service delivery and individual donations, together with a small number of other changes which are intended to support good governance

The closing date for the consultation is 12 August. Make sure you [take part!](#)

Have you included your public benefit statement in your accounts?

If your charity's income is over £25,000 in the accounting year, you must send us a copy of your [accounts](#) and [annual report](#). In this, trustees must report on how they have carried out their charity's purposes for the public benefit.

Trustees of 'smaller registered charities' (income below £500,000) must include:

- a brief description of the charity's main activities which carry out its charitable purposes for the public benefit
- a statement as to whether they have had due regard to our [public benefit guidance](#) when necessary

Trustees of 'larger registered charities' (income above £500,000) must include:

- a review of the significant activities undertaken by the charity to carry out its charitable purposes for the public benefit
- the charity's purposes and objectives strategies adopted and activities undertaken to achieve those purposes and objectives
- details of the achievements by reference to the purposes and objectives set
- a statement as to whether they have had due regard to our public benefit guidance when necessary

For more details on public benefit reporting, including examples and how it can help your charity, see our guidance, [Public benefit: reporting \(PB3\)](#).

Introducing our new operations function monitoring team

We set up an operations function monitoring team to pro-actively monitor a wide spectrum of different sized charities, and identify issues that are of concern to us. Monitoring activities include inspections of charity books and records, review visits and providing charities with

action plans to rectify issues of concern. The role of the monitoring team is to ensure charities comply with their regulatory duties and that trustee boards act in the best interests of the charities. Our [Annual Report and Accounts](#) demonstrated this new team's impact, which

actioned 318 referrals between October 2013 and April 2014. Issues of high risk or serious concern will be referred to our Investigations and Enforcement team or to other enforcement agencies.

Have you read our new guidance on setting up a charity?

We have published [revised guidance on setting up and registering a charity](#), which also contains information useful to existing trustees:

- [how to write charitable objects](#), details how to write objects correctly and describes the difference between objects and mission statements. Charities which are restructuring will also find this useful
- have you just become a trustee? Check out the explanation of [what a charity is](#)
- are you making new trustee appointments? Use the refreshed [Trustee Declaration form](#) to confirm eligibility

Get involved in Trustees' Week 2014

Trustees' Week 2014 runs 10-16 November. Now in its fifth year, the campaign showcases the admirable work that trustees do and highlights opportunities for people from all walks of life to get involved. Led by a partner group of bodies including the Charity Commission, NCVO, Institute of

Fundraising and Small Charities Coalition, Trustees' Week also indicates resources available to help existing trustees run their charities. Trustees' Week 2014 is officially launching at the NCVO's Trustee Conference on 10 November 2014 - an annual event raising awareness of trusteeship.

Enter the [Trustees' Week 2014 'One In A Million' video competition](#), to win a ticket to the NCVO Trustee Conference and drinks reception!

Find out more by visiting the [Trustees' Week website](#) and following [@trusteesweek](#)

Help increase public accountability in fundraising

This year's [Complaints Report](#) from the Fundraising Standards Board (FRSB) presents a shift towards greater transparency and accountability, with over 1,200 fundraising charities submitting a complaint return as part of their self-regulatory requirements.

Overall, these charities reported 48,432 fundraising complaints from 2013. The largest charities reported the majority of concerns with an average of 515 complaints, while the smallest typically received just one or none.

Complaints vary widely, from incorrectly spelled names and addresses on mailings to allegations of poor behaviour by doorstep fundraisers.

Although the total number of complaints is higher than in previous years, the proportion of complaints to volume of activity remains low.

Charities that commit to self-regulation of fundraising and submit complaint information help increase public accountability in charity fundraising. If your charity is an FRSB member, make sure you play your part and submit an annual complaints return when asked.



Want to keep up with all our news, guidance and events? Make sure you're following us on [@ChtyCommission](#)