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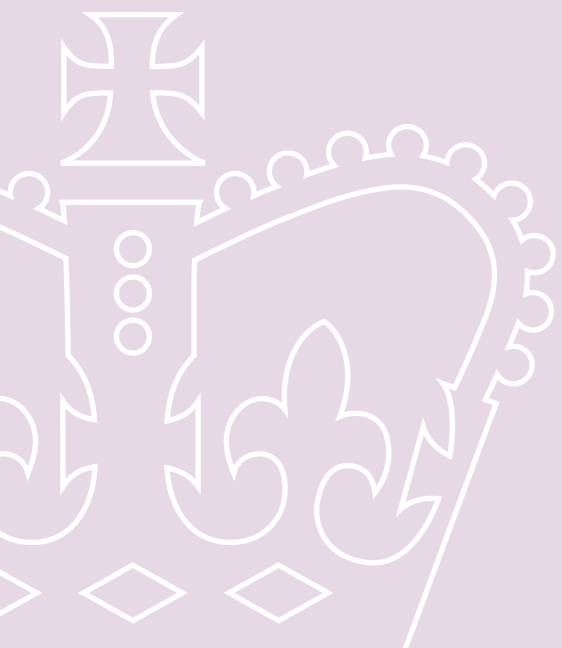
CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES



Charity Commission Strategy 2024-29

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Foreword from our Chair



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The Board of the Charity Commission wanted a new strategy that would send a strong signal of our continuing ambition to be an expert regulator that is fair, balanced and independent. Such a regulator is key to the thriving of charities in England and Wales. Charities play a vital role within our society, supporting the most vulnerable, binding communities of place and interest, improving countless lives in myriad ways. Their ability to do this rests on public trust and confidence, which in turn requires expert regulation.

This 2024-29 Corporate Strategy, with its five priorities of fairness, balance, independence, digital and data, and people, set within the context of our statutory remit, functions and powers, maps our course ahead in this respect. We believe that, in working to this strategy over the next five years, the Commission will cement its ambition to be an expert regulator, and so will help ensure that charities' enduring place within our society is protected, and secured, into the future.

Orlando Fraser KC
Chair



Our ambition

To be the expert Charity Commission that is fair, balanced, and independent so that charity can thrive.

Our ambition will help to create and sustain an environment where charities further build public trust and ultimately fulfil their essential role in enhancing lives and strengthening society.

Who we are

The Charity Commission has a long and proud history with over 170 years of regulating charities. While our core purpose has remained unchanged since the mid-19th century, how we achieve that purpose and deliver our ambition has continuously evolved. We respond effectively to changing needs and risks, addressing new opportunities, and ensuring we are proactive in supporting the sector through periods of change and challenge. Our ambition for the coming five years is another chapter in our history.

We were established by an Act of Parliament and are charged with delivering five statutory objectives:

- Increase public trust and confidence in charities.
- Promote awareness and understanding of the operation of the public benefit requirement.
- Promote compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations in exercising control and management of the administration of their charities.
- Promote the effective use of charitable resources.
- Enhance the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries, and the general public.

Our ambition, together with our legal obligations, represent what it is that we are here to do – and what it is that we stand for. All our stakeholders – the charities and trustees we regulate, the public we serve, the Parliament to which we are accountable, the partners with whom we collaborate and the people we employ – need to be clear about our role, our ambitions, and objectives.

This strategy sets out what we want to achieve and where we want to get to in the five years ahead. It articulates our aim to serve as an expert Commission that operates with fairness, balance, and independence in all our activities.

Context

The charity sector is a significant force for good in England and Wales – in size, scale, and the contribution to the economy. It is also diverse – ranging from large charities with more organised, professional business models to smaller community charities.

The entire charity sector is dependent upon – literally fuelled by – public support, in the form of individual willingness to offer money, expertise, support, or time to help. As an expert, effective regulator, the Commission plays an important role in sustaining public trust and confidence on which the support of the sector relies.

The next five years will present new challenges and opportunities both for the sector and the Commission as regulator. Advances in technology will offer new avenues to support charity and promote accountability, but they will also increase the threat of misleading information being shared whether through deepfakes or across social media.

Fresh from the disruption caused by the pandemic, charities have been severely tested by the impacts of a once in a generation cost of living crisis. Beyond our shores, conflict, natural disasters, political instability, and the effects of climate change have been sadly too common. Increased demand for services, rising costs and downward pressures on income have challenged, and will continue to test the resilience of the sector, whilst highlighting its importance to our society.

Over the coming five years, to deal with this ever-changing world, charities will need to be resilient financially, as well as in their leadership. Our role in supporting this and doing what we can to promote and position trusteeship as an attractive proposition, is critical context for this strategy.



Our Values

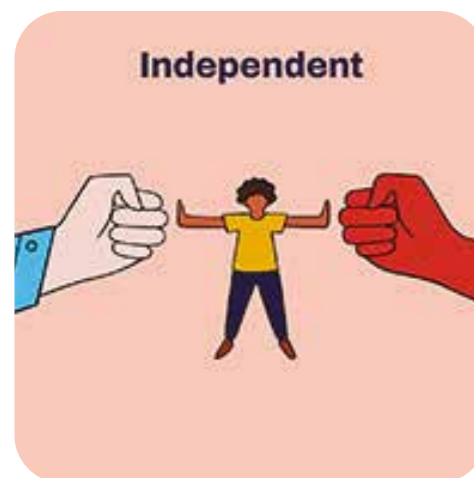
We are an expert Charity Commission that is **fair, balanced, and independent**.



- We ensure there is consistency in how we treat people – acting in a way that is free from bias.
- We make sure our processes and guidance are clear, rigorous, and meet professional standards.
- We take the time to explain what we are doing, why we are doing it and what our role is.



- We investigate concerns, hold charities to account to established standards and deal robustly with intentional wrongdoers.
- We support trustees and others to run their charities well.
- We understand that the best laid plans can go awry and help charities to correct those mistakes when they happen.



- We act impartially, making decisions based on evidence.
- We listen to all concerns with the respect they deserve – but we are beholden to no-one in applying the law.
- We act without fear or favour from any other entity – whether that's Government, the sector, or the public.

We work together in a way that is **supportive, collaborative, and innovative** to achieve our ambitions.



- We ensure everyone can grow, develop, and find fulfilment in their work.
- We challenge each other constructively and are receptive to being challenged.
- We take responsibility for our actions, understand our impact, and look out for each other's well-being.



- We believe we are better when we work across teams and professions.
- We understand our organisation – we know who does what, where our strengths are and how to share our knowledge and expertise.
- We take time to get to know each other, meet new people and network internally and externally.



- We evolve and adapt, meeting emerging stakeholder needs and delivering for all.
- We have the confidence to try new things and learn from our mistakes.
- We embrace learning about new ideas and different ways of working.



Our Priorities

Our priorities for the next five years have been shaped both by what has come before and what we understand lies ahead. We have drawn on knowledge from our relationships with sector representatives, who experience our regulation, and our wider network of key stakeholders, with whom we collaborate to deliver our objectives. We have gathered insights from all of our teams, who are at the forefront of regulating charities.

Those conversations have shaped the following five priorities:

1. We will be fair and proportionate in our work and clear about our role.
2. We will support charities to get it right but take robust action where we see wrongdoing and harm.
3. We will speak with authority and credibility, free from the influence of others.
4. We will embrace technological innovation and strengthen how we use our data.
5. We will be the expert Commission - where our people are empowered and enabled to deliver excellence in regulation.

Priority One: We will be fair and proportionate in our work and clear about our role

This means that we will deal fairly and pragmatically with concerns, including to identify a swift resolution to those issues wherever that is possible. We will act decisively, in the best interests of the public, and to return charities to compliance with the law, where needed. Sometimes our actions and decisions will be unpopular, but we will take extra care to explain why our processes led us to those outcomes – taking every opportunity to provide helpful lessons for the wider sector.

Across our regulatory remit, we will focus the most attention on issues where the Commission can make the greatest difference. We will make use of all available evidence and information to help inform early identification of emerging risk. We will be increasingly proactive in our approach, advising the sector as a whole, and individual charities, of the steps they can take, to avoid us having to step in to address a more serious problem further down the line.

As well as making it easier for trustees this approach will ensure we can dedicate capacity to rigorous handling of matters that are more complex and require sustained intervention or need us to work closely with other specialist agencies.

When we explain our regulatory approach, we will be consistent, confident, and direct in our engagement and communications. Those who want to raise issues about charities with us will know we take their concerns seriously but will understand what they can expect us to do and not to do. We will make every effort to be clear about what our role is with all our stakeholders, including setting out what the matters are that we cannot deal with under charity law.

How we will achieve this

- Ensure all our communications are straightforward and easy to understand, yet sufficiently detailed so that we better manage understanding of our decisions, with clear expectations around our processes and remit.
- Review our existing risk operating framework so definitions of the risks we consider are clearer, as is what we can and cannot do.
- Be more explicit on the standard of evidence we require to be able to consider concerns raised about charities, and the threshold for our action.
- Increase early identification of potential compliance concerns and improve how we then open dialogue with charities to take preventative measures.

Outcome

Trustees are confident on what they need to do to act with integrity, following the law and our guidance, leaving them to focus on delivering impact for their beneficiaries. There is no doubt that our decision-making is fair and consistent. Public trust in the integrity of the sector is increased with the understanding that the sector is proportionately and effectively regulated. Where they have a concern, stakeholders are clearer on the Commission's remit and the action we can take.

Priority Two: We will support charities to get it right but take robust action where we see wrongdoing and harm

This means that we place equal emphasis on being a source of support to trustees, but also a tough enforcer. We will think about the actions we need trustees to take to underpin strong governance throughout the sector and to ensure charities deliver public benefit. We will be flexible in selecting the right interventions to encourage this, based on what we know works.

Ultimately the sustainability of the charitable sector relies on the enthusiasm, generosity, and capability of trustees. We will provide individuals with clear, relevant information and support to help them to build their understanding of what it means to be an effective trustee. Our resources must be appropriate for a range of audiences, from the smallest charities to large and complex organisations.

Where we uncover wrongdoing that harms an individual charity and diminishes the reputation of charity, we will be robust and tenacious in using our powers to secure the right outcomes to protect beneficiaries, charitable resources, staff, and donors. However, we will always recognise the efforts of busy trustees who are balancing conflicting pressures and often come to us at a difficult time. We know that honest mistakes do occur. Where it is right to do so we will work collaboratively with trustees, seeking a proportionate way to correct those mistakes.

How we will achieve this

- Strengthen our use of data and intelligence to both build capability in charities, and to prevent and penalise negligent and malicious behaviour.
- Deploy the full range of powers at our disposal to tackle wrongdoing and harm and to promote compliance.
- Continue to deliver improvements to, and actively raise awareness of, our guidance to enable trustees to better understand their role and what they need to do to run their charities well.
- Work with charities to support efforts to secure trustees and finances for long-term sustainability. Our approach encourages trusteeship and amplifies donor and philanthropic confidence through robust but proportionate regulation.

Outcomes

Trustees will come to us for expert support and guidance. Both new and experienced trustees will understand their obligations, and so make fewer accidental mistakes. The Commission will create a positive regulatory environment that maintains appropriate safeguards without hindering important opportunities for trusteeship or all types of charitable giving. Timely and robust enforcement action will provide a powerful deterrent to bad actors, and so charitable assets will be secure and vulnerable people protected.



Priority Three: We will speak with authority and credibility, free from the influence of others

This means that we are the authority on charity regulation, leading the agenda within our statutory remit. We will provide leadership and valuable insight to promote understanding of the role of charities in society, and support the sustainability of a diverse, well-resourced, and effective charity sector.

We will listen to and understand all perspectives across England and Wales, recognising the diversity of the sector across the nations. Whether in conversation with government, politicians, charities, policymakers, or the public we will always follow the facts rather than the voices shouting the loudest.

Our decision-making processes will be grounded in the law and guided by expert intelligence, analytical rigour, and an improved understanding of risk. We will evaluate all input from diverse perspectives. Impartiality and inclusivity will be threaded throughout decision-making processes.

We will promote respect, tolerance, and consideration for others in our dialogue, recognising that we deal with divisive and contentious issues not least because of the centrality of charity to society. We expect charities and trustees to follow suit and will support them to do so.

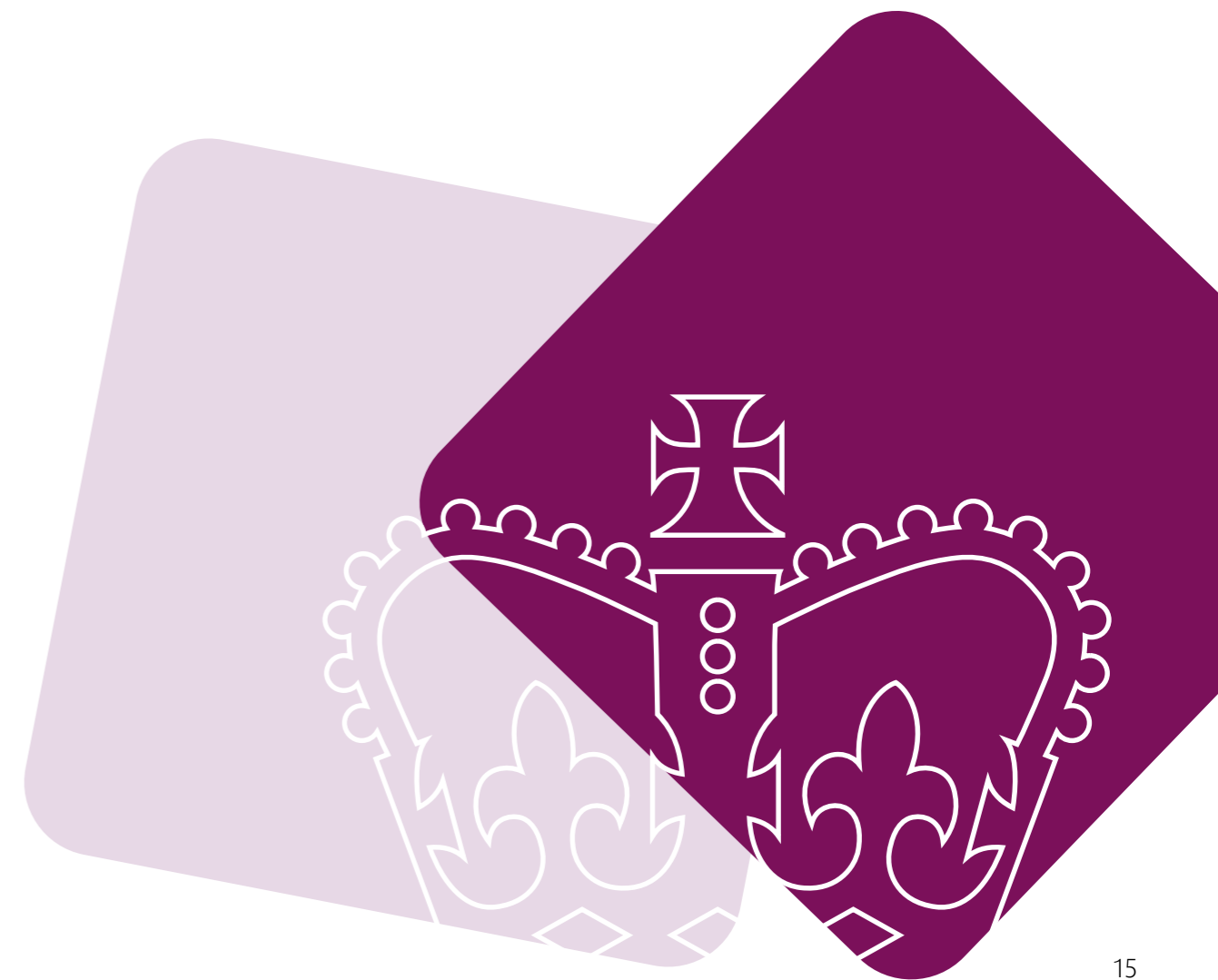


How we will achieve this

- Refresh our communications to use our voice, share our insight, and reflect what different audiences need from us. We talk about our work confidently. We speak out when charities fall short but support charities to further their purposes within the law, even where some disagree with their views.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for charities, experts, parliamentarians, and the public to inform the development of new services, policies, and guidance.
- Improve how we measure public and trustee perspectives of charity and the Commission's impact.
- Use our expertise to help other policymakers and Government Departments understand how their proposals or draft legislation impacts charity regulation.

Outcomes

The Commission will do, and be seen to do, the right thing. Our motives and actions will transparently be independent, without undue or improper influence. The Commission will be respected for its ability to articulately speak up and contribute to accurate and informed debate about charity, even where there is passionate disagreement.





Priority Four: We will embrace technological innovation and strengthen how we use our data

This means that charities will be able to use digital technology to give us the information we need in the most resource and time efficient way. We will evolve, and improve the effectiveness of, existing online services. We will focus on how trustees interact with us so that people can easily find what they need from us, themselves.

As a risk-based regulator, over the full period of the strategy, we will review the amount of data we collect, through mechanisms like the annual return. We will look at how we organise our data and use our data proactively in our regulatory decision making.

This will include introducing more precise and accurate classifications of the kinds of charity we regulate, for example the purpose they serve or where they are based. Over time, this grouping of charities will allow us to increasingly deliver regulation and advice to charities that is targeted rather than universal, and distributed only, and directly, to those whom we know need to hear about a particular risk.

We will look at how we can share data and information more broadly, particularly to reduce any duplication in collection points, both by ourselves and from other bodies. Whilst retaining high data protection standards, we will unlock the potential for sharing data we hold about the size and scale of the sector where this will generate benefit for charities and the public.

How we will achieve this

- Improve our digital services to enhance the speed, quality, and efficiency of our service to charities. There will be a straightforward experience for routine interactions and updates, such as filing accounts and registration.
- Strengthen our ability to use data to act proactively. Build on the themes of open data, data curation and stewardship by raising the quality of data that we collect and use, working in partnership with others where required.
- Understand how we and the sector can adopt and maximise the benefits of advancements in technology while continuing to operate safely and securely.
- Evolve our public Register so that information about charities is easy to find, transparent and helps the public to make informed choices about charity and gives interested parties accessible and accurate data about charity and its impact in England and Wales.

Outcome

It will be easy to find high-quality information, to ensure individual charities are accountable. We will get better at analysing our data to improve our understanding of key trends and how our regulatory activity uses this. We will look to make these improved data more accessible, increasing the awareness of others of the impact, scope, and value of the sector. Well-run, compliant charities will always find that our enhanced digital services enable them to deal with us simply and straightforwardly.

Priority Five: We will be the expert Commission, where our people are empowered and enabled to deliver excellence in regulation

This means that we will be an organisation that is highly skilled and operates with excellence at the heart of all we do. Our culture attracts, retains, engages, and develops talented people who believe in what the Commission does.

We will support our people to be the best they can be by continually building individual capabilities and strengthening capacity. We will ensure the organisation is set up to deliver, but be agile in how we use our resources, in a way that provides the best value to the public.

We will strive for a culture of continuous improvement, upskilling our data and analytics capability and making sure that our tools and processes enable our ambition.

With our values embedded in our ways of working, we will be an inclusive place to work, with a workforce that understands and reflects the sector we regulate and the perspectives of the public we serve.

How we will achieve this

- Develop the capacity and capability of our people, implementing a career structure that emphasises expertise and excellence, enabling opportunities for progression and continuous development.
- Through the behaviours we reward, promote, and role-model, we have a culture where colleagues are included, valued, and encouraged to contribute ideas that raise our standards.
- Continuously evaluate how we work most effectively within and between teams, to draw together the range of professional expertise and skills across the Commission and support excellent delivery against all our business objectives.
- Drive improvements in our decision-making through our quality assurance framework.

Outcome

Our people will be fully equipped to serve and regulate charities well, fulfilling the full range of our ambitions to be the expert Commission. They will enjoy working for the Commission and have greater opportunities to build their careers and develop their expertise. With a knowledgeable and well-supported staff, we will be positioned to deliver excellence in regulation.



Measuring our success

In early 2024, we will begin work to identify a set of strategic impact measures. We will set out the new measures, aligned to the five strategic priorities, in mid-2024. We will report against those measures for the first time in the Annual Report for 2024-25, which will be published in July 2025.

Our objective in developing these measures will be to ensure that we are as transparent and accountable as the sector we regulate, and that we can understand the effectiveness and effect of our intervention. This is not always straightforward to measure, and we may have to use proxy indicators in some circumstances.

We will think critically about how we use our Annual Research programme – which looks at trustee understanding of their duties and responsibilities, specific issues developing in the sector, and public attitudes towards charity and the Commission – to best effect to complement the strategy and engage closely with our stakeholders on this theme.



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