



An Rialálaí
Carthanas
Charities
Regulator

Charities Regulator Customer Service Charter and Action Plan

June 2023

Background – Who We Are

The Charities Regulator is the independent statutory body responsible for registering and regulating charities operating in Ireland. Our key functions include maintaining a public register of charities and ensuring compliance with the Charities Acts.

We also deal with concerns about charities and under [Part 4 of the Charities Act 2009](#) the Charities Regulator has the power to appoint inspectors to investigate the affairs of any charity.

Additionally, we provide services to certain charities, including authorising the appointment of new charity trustees, approving Cy-Près schemes and authorising the disposition of charity property where a charity does not have a power of sale to deal with the property.

Our Mission

To regulate the charity sector in the public interest to ensure compliance with charity law and support best practice in the governance and administration of charities.

Our Values:



Our Functions

The Charities Regulator's main functions include:

- increasing public trust and confidence in the management and administration of charities;
- registering charities and maintaining a public register of charities;
- promoting compliance by charity trustees with their duties;
- helping charities and charity trustees to understand and better meet their obligations by publishing guidelines, codes and model documents;
- ensuring the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries and the public; and
- providing our stakeholders, including the Minister and the public, with information regarding registered charities.

There is a full list of the Charities Regulator's functions in [Section 14](#) of the Charities Act 2009.

Purpose of this Charter

The Charities Regulator is committed to providing a quality service to its customers. The purpose of this Charter is to set out the standard of service we aim to provide. Our work greatly depends on a mutually respectful relationship with our customers therefore we aim to engage with them in a courteous, straightforward and professional manner, to ensure the timely delivery of services and to be informative and effective in our engagement.

Our Customers

The Charities Regulator interacts with a broad spectrum of internal and external customers such as:

- Charitable organisations including charity trustees, other volunteers and employees;
- Beneficiaries of charitable organisations;
- Members of the general public;
- Staff of the Charities Regulator;
- The Minister for Rural and Community Development;
- Other government departments and committees; and
- Other regulators, public bodies and State agencies.

The Charities Regulator works to understand the needs and expectations of its customers. We make every effort to ensure that feedback on our performance is obtained and utilised.

Our Commitment to Customers

1. Quality Service Standards

The Charities Regulator is committed to providing our customers with an effective and efficient service in accordance with the [12 Principles of Quality Customer Service](#) as outlined by the Department of An Taoiseach. In accordance with these principles, we will:

1. Provide a range of contact channels for customers including web forms, telephone and e-mail.
2. Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, accurate, accessible, and timely.
3. Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between the Charities Regulator and our customers.
4. Process queries fairly and impartially and provide clear and concise responses to our customers. If your enquiry relates to a matter that comes within the remit of another public body, we will direct you to the public body or, with your consent, we will forward your enquiry to that body on your behalf.
5. Assess and review our levels of customer service and seek to continually improve the ways in which we provide services to customers to ensure effective and efficient service delivery.

2. Equality/Diversity

The Charities Regulator is committed to equality and diversity and will ensure that customers' rights to equal treatment under equality legislation are upheld when delivering services.

Action Plan

1. Treat all customers equally and in accordance with equality legislation.
2. Provide translation and interpretation services, including Irish sign language, to meet customer needs.
3. Provide application forms in alternative formats, such as Braille, audio or other languages (as far as practicable), on request.
4. Make all major publications available in both Irish and English.
5. Conduct correspondence through Irish where requested.
6. Ensure that material on our [website](#) conforms to appropriate web publication guidelines in terms of accessibility and [official language requirements](#).

Our Access Officer is happy to arrange supports for people to access our information. They can be contacted by email at Accessofficer@charitiesregulator.ie

3. Information

The Charities Regulator will make every effort to ensure that we are proactive in providing information to our customers and that information is provided to all relevant stakeholders in a clear and timely fashion. We will ensure that our publications meet the requirements of people with specific needs in terms of accessibility and official languages. We will ensure documents relating to our policies and procedures are available through our website.

We manage and maintain the [Charities Regulator's website](#). The website acts as the main source of information relating to the regulation of the charities sector in Ireland. We also maintain the [Public Register of Charities](#) (or Charities Register) through the website.

Action Plan

1. Ensure that our publications are written using simple and clear language;
2. Ensure that information published on our website is timely and kept up-to-date;
3. Provide customers with information that is comprehensive, clear, accurate and accessible for customers with specific needs;
4. Ensure that application forms and information leaflets comply with plain English standards and best practice;
5. Ensure that requests for information in alternative formats or languages are facilitated where practicable;
6. Ensure that key publications and forms are available in both English and Irish;
7. Publish an E-zine (electronic newsletter) on a bi-monthly basis and issue it to subscribers to the E-zine;
8. Publish a compliance report on an annual basis; and
9. Make our stakeholders aware of key updates and newly published information and guidance through updates on our website and social media channels, as well as press releases, where appropriate.

4. Timeliness and Courtesy

The Charities Regulator is committed to delivering quality customer service with courtesy, sensitivity and with minimum delay, with a view to fostering a climate of mutual respect with our customers.

- When you call us we will answer your phone call as soon as possible;
- we will identify ourselves when we answer;
- we will be polite and helpful, and do our best to provide you with clear and correct information;
- we will direct your call to the correct area or individual; and
- we will respond to voice messages within 24 – 48 hours, if possible; and we may ask that you submit your query in writing to help us respond if your query is complex in nature.

Our general queries phone line is 01-6331500. It is open from 10am to 1pm Monday to Friday.

While we understand that callers occasionally may be experiencing difficulties or be in a stressful situation, we request that our customers approach us with courtesy and respect. We reserve the right to terminate a call or decline enquiries if a caller becomes abusive, offensive or aggressive to staff members during a telephone call.

When you write to us via email, web query or post with any query:

- we aim to acknowledge all written correspondence within two working days;
- we aim to respond to the query within five working days. In some cases this may take longer depending on the nature or complexity of the enquiry. (This excludes the processes for dealing with [concerns](#) and [complaints](#), where separate policies apply);
- we will endeavour to issue final replies to all written correspondence within 15 working days of the date of the query where it is feasible to do so. When this is not possible we will provide you with information as to the status of your query; and
- where applicable we will issue correspondence with a reference number.

When you contact us by Social media

The Charities Regulator use social media platforms as a channel (and not our only channel) to provide information to, and where appropriate, engage directly with the public. It is not intended as a means of contacting members of staff of the Charities Regulator or for submitting complaints, press queries, or other forms of official communication.

The Charities Regulator has a [social media policy](#) that sets out what information you can expect to receive and how we interact using these platforms.

When you visit our Office:

- we will endeavour to arrange meetings on a date and time that suits the customer;
- we will provide a private meeting room where a meeting is scheduled to take place at our office;
- we will ensure that visitors to our office are treated courteously; and
- we will ensure that our office is accessible for all customers with disabilities. Where possible, we ask that visitors provide us with advance notice of any access or other requirements so that we can make any necessary arrangements. Any issues or difficulties in relation to physical access will be addressed without delay. For access queries customers can email the Access Officer in the Charities Regulator at Accessofficer@charitiesregulator.ie

if we cannot deal with a customer's query during a scheduled meeting at our office, we will consider any information that is provided and endeavour to respond to the query as soon as possible and no later than 20 working days after the date of the meeting. All areas of our office will be clean, comfortable and comply with occupational and safety standards.

It is important to note that our office is not a public office. Meetings with staff are by appointment. Due to prior work commitments an unscheduled visitor may be asked to make an appointment.

5. Services in Irish

In addition to publishing key documents and forms in both English and Irish, we aim to facilitate customer requests to engage with the Charities Regulator through Irish.

We maintain an Irish language version of our website and will ensure that it is kept up-to-date.

6. Complaints and Appeals

We maintain an accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided by the Charities Regulator. We deal with issues of customer dissatisfaction in an objective and fair manner.

If you have a complaint about the service you receive from the Charities Regulator you can email complaints@charitiesregulator.ie. If your complaint is upheld or if we have made a mistake, we will make every effort to rectify the situation as quickly as possible.

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been dealt with in line with this policy, you can appeal the decision of the Complaints Officer to one of our two Appeals Officers by emailing complaintsappeals@charitiesregulator.ie.

Further information regarding complaints and appeals procedures can be found in our [Complaints Policy](#) which is published on our website.

Providing Feedback

The Charities Regulator welcomes customer feedback as a means of helping us develop our services and evaluate the level of service we are providing. We encourage our staff to treat every contact with a customer as a way of improving our quality of service.

Customers can offer their comments and suggestions using the contact options outlined on the [Contact Us](#) section of our website.

We will, from time to time, send surveys to customers as a way of garnering customer feedback.

Help Us to Help You

To assist us in meeting our aims, it would be helpful if our customers would consider taking the following steps when dealing with us.

- Provide us with your full contact details if you require a response.
- Provide us with reference number in relation to ongoing communications.
- Give accurate and relevant information, including supporting documentation, where necessary.
- Respond to requests for additional information as promptly as possible.
- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect. Please listen and adhere to their guidance as they work to provide you with the most comprehensive and efficient response to your query. This fosters an environment of mutual respect between staff in the Charities Regulator and those we serve, and assists us in providing the best possible customer care.
- Please let us know what you think of the service we provide by submitting comments, views and suggestions to info@charitiesregulator.ie. We will always endeavour to use this feedback to assist us in providing the best possible customer service.

We believe all customers have the right to be heard, understood, and respected. Similarly we request that our staff are treated with courtesy and respect. Our staff are not obliged to deal with customers who are abusive, offensive or threatening to them and the Charities Regulator reserves the right to limit or terminate contact with anyone engaging in these behaviours towards staff and to decline enquiries which are of a frivolous, vexatious or repetitive nature.

Disclaimer

This Charter and Action Plan does not apply to the Charities Regulator's 'Raise a Concern' process. The 'Raise a Concern' process is governed by the Charities Regulator's **Concerns Policy**. The Concerns Policy sets out how the Charities Regulator deals with concerns raised about charities. The 'Raise a Concern' process is a confidential process, subject to any legal duty of disclosure and is therefore outside of the scope of this Charter. Further, this Charter may not apply in circumstances where statutory investigations or legal proceedings are contemplated or ongoing.

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