



An Rialálaí
Carthanas

Charities
Regulator

Charities Regulator Customer Service Charter and Action Plan

September 2020

Background – Who We Are

The Charities Regulator was established as an **independent** Authority in 2014 in accordance with the Charities Act 2009. The Charities Regulator has a number of functions, such as maintaining the Register of Charities, ensuring that charities comply with their legal requirements, carrying out investigations into the affairs of charities and issuing guidance materials.

Main Functions

All of the Charities Regulator's main functions involve working with our customers as defined below. Our main functions include the following:

- registering charitable organisations;
- gathering annual reporting information from charitable organisations;
- gathering information regarding potential concerns related to charities and carrying out inquiries and investigations where appropriate;
- providing you, the public, with information regarding registered charities including how to register as a charitable organisation and how to raise a concern.

Vision, Mission & Values

The Charities Regulator's **vision** is a vibrant, trusted charity sector that is valued for the public benefit that it provides. Our **mission** is to regulate the charity sector in the public interest so as to ensure compliance with the law and support best practice in the governance, management and administration of charities.

The Charities Regulator's **values** are proportionality, independence, fairness, engagement and transparency. These values are at the core of how the Charities Regulator seeks to achieve its mission.

Purpose of this Charter

The purpose of this Charter is to set out the standard of service we aim to provide to our customers. Our work greatly depends on a healthy and mutually respectful relationship with our stakeholders therefore our aim is to engage with our customers in a courteous 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 including:

- Charitable organisations
- 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

- Other regulators, public bodies and State agencies
- Providers of goods and services

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

Our Commitment to Customers

1. The Charities Regulator is committed to providing you, 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 –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 and timely.
3. Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between the Charities Regulator and its 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, direct you to the public body or, with your consent, 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.

Equality/Diversity

The Charities Regulator 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 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 the following available in both Irish and English: All major publications including the Charities Governance Code and our Annual Report.
5. Conduct correspondence through Irish where requested.
6. Ensure that material on our website <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en> conforms with web publication guidelines in terms of accessibility and official language requirements.

Information

The Charities Regulator will make every effort to ensure that we maintain a proactive approach to 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 are made available in electronic and printed formats and 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 official Charities Regular website, www.charitiesregulator.ie. 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 EZine (electronic newsletter) on a quarterly basis and issue it to subscribers to the Ezine;
8. Publish a compliance report on an annual basis;
9. Make our stakeholders aware of key updates and newly published information and guidance through website updates and press releases, where appropriate.

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.

While we understand that callers may be experiencing difficulties or be in a stressful situation, 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 2 working days.
- we aim to respond to the query within 5 working days. In some cases this may take longer depending on the nature or complexity of the enquiry.
- 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.
- where applicable we will issue correspondence with a reference number.

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.
- 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.

We will ensure that our office is accessible for all customers with disabilities. Where possible, we are grateful if visitors can provide us with advance notice of any access or other requirements so that we can make any necessary arrangements.

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

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.

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.

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 developing our services and evaluating 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 through the contact channels 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 the Charities Regulator in meeting its aims, it would be helpful if our customers would consider taking the following steps when dealing with us.

- Have any reference numbers / all accurate and relevant information and contact details to hand when making enquiries in relation to new matters or ongoing cases with the Charities Regulator.
- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect. 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.

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 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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Charities Regulator

3 George's Dock

IFSC

Dublin 1

D01 X5X0

Telephone: 01 633 1500

www.charitiesregulator.ie

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