

Charities Regulator Stakeholder Forum

Date: 15 October 2024

Location: Charities Regulator, Georges Dock Dublin 1 and virtual.

The fourth – and final - meeting of the Charities Regulator's pilot Stakeholder Forum was held on 15 October 2024. An agenda was circulated before the meeting.

Charities Regulator updates

- Madeleine Delaney (Chief Executive) updated the members on the steps involved in implementing the Charities (Amendment) Act 2024. She said the Charities Regulator is working closely with the Department for Rural and Community Development. The changes will broadly fall into a short, medium or longer term timeframe depending on what is needed for their introduction such as changes to the Charities Regulator's IT systems, additional resources, guidance and consultation with the sector.
- The Charities Regulator is committed to producing a simple overview of the key changes and a rough timeline. Madeleine Delaney confirmed that regulations will be needed to introduce the changes to the preparation of financial statements, whereas other changes could be introduced by way of a ministerial order. She noted comments by the sector about the difficulties some charities are experiencing in engaging the services of auditors.
- Thomas Mulholland (Director of Compliance and Enforcement) updated the forum on the percentage of charities that had filed annual reports for 2023. He said the regulator was looking at ways to make it clearer which charities are complying with the law and filing on time. He also highlighted the role of trustees in discussing and deciding on important matters relating to their charity.
- Geraldine McCarthy (Head of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement) provided an update on plans for Charity Trustees Week 2024.

Group discussions – Stakeholder Forum pilot

- Madeleine Delaney acknowledged the significant contribution of the members to the success of the pilot, and the benefit to the regulator of their experience and insights which they shared at the forum meetings.
- The members, in small groups, discussed how the pilot had worked in practice, to provide feedback to the Charities Regulator on how the forum could operate in the future. Key points and suggestions that emerged included:
 - The forum provided the charity trustees with a good insight into the Charities Regulator including the challenges it faces

- The time commitment was not huge. Increase number of meetings per annum from two to three and consider extending term from two years to three.
- Rather than having an entirely new membership every two years, members suggested consideration be given to introducing a rotation system, similar to boards.
- Some challenges noted with hybrid meetings. Members suggested one virtual meeting at least per year, where all attendees are using same meeting format.
- Agenda items – discussions on operational and topical matters with feedback to members on how their input has been used / benefited the work of the regulator.
- Review stakeholder forum charter, which some considered to be lengthy.