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# Charity Commission

## Qualitative Comments from Administrative Burdens Measurement Exercise

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# Results of qualitative responses to business interviews

The table below sets out the results of qualitative responses obtained from business through telephone and face-to-face interviews. These responses may be affected by unknown biases and may cover issues that the Charity Commission has no power to change.

<b>Charity Commission</b>
<b>Complexity of regulation</b>
Charities commission still uses a lot of jargon, would be good if it could be reduced.
For small organisations run by volunteers, it is a demand to keep track of regulations. In bigger organisations it is not that difficult. There are difficulties for small organisations to gain the information from local authorities. Sometimes it is back to determining very swiftly the information relevant to you as an organisation as there are larger organisation and the degree of scrutiny. When you look at the risk it is very daunting to understand the things that they want to do and it's not relevant to small organisation. The jargon in legislation can be a problem. In voluntary organisations it is not always understandable especially if you are not involved in that field. Make it simple and understandable.
I would like to see a simplified VAT system for charities. At present they are much too complex.
It is a burden and a hassle and it costs money but they have to be able to show they are responsible acting legally and being good stewards of the money.
Just make it more understandable, it's very vague and they should give more detail.
Level of information required is an onerous task and it serves no relevant purpose to charities but causes expense to charities to comply.
Over the last few years put one more burden after the other and its becoming too much for an organisation which is run entirely by volunteers. The Government could be more helpful to organisations such as ours as it's becoming more difficult to get funding.
Onerous complex and over burdensome
Regulations have been and are increasingly onerous and are not particularly helping in the administration of a charity.
Simplification of language used would be of significant benefit.
SORP 2005 - is overcomplicated, have to apportion out times for different activities which has added to time

taken for admin. Reduce levels of precision of allocation of time.
System is required to be simplified.
Tedious. We come into smaller charities, only about 2 million pounds. The actual processes are the same; there are no concessions for a smaller charity. We have limited resources and it puts a huge amount of pressure on us. The threshold of £10K does not make sense. There should be some form of regulation; there could be a progressive level for small, medium and large something like that.
The annual report is a good discipline for charities - but the information needed pertaining to the market value of investment is very difficult to accurately arrive at and it would be helpful if the requirement/question were altered/restructured.
Too many levels of bureaucracy and number of reports but as governed by statute had to comply.
Too much detail expected. Time consuming exercise.
What I'd like to see is a focus on getting info that is absolutely necessary. I appreciate there is a need to be accountable however legislation has gone too far in requesting too much detail
<b>Volume of regulation</b>
Benchmarking required is totally ridiculous where advisors practically have to record visits and telephone calls to meet required targets and show efficiency conducted.
Constant change in regulations is extremely frustrating time consuming and expensive.
Daily requirements associated with the required compliance to regulation are becoming more time consuming and expensive to adhere to.
Don't fill all the forms, just send audited accounts.
Far too many regulations, spend time complying with these and finds them completely useless!
Far too many regulations.
For small organisation run by volunteers, it is a demand to keep track of regulations. In bigger organisations it is not that difficult. There are difficulties for small organisations to gain the information from local authority. Sometimes it is back to determining very swiftly the information relevant to you as an organisation as there are larger organisation and the degree of scrutiny. When you look at the risk it is very daunting to understand the things that they want to do and it's not relevant to small organisation. The jargon in legislation can be a problem. In voluntary organisation it is not always understandable especially if you are not involved in that field. Make it simple and understandable.
I believe the time complying with the regulation for the Charity Commission is very reasonable, but the time required to comply with the requirement for the Companies House is unreasonable - about twice as much time is required to comply with the Companies House as with the Charity Commission. I hope that charities in the future will be free from the need to be registered companies.
I understand that there is an Act to go through parliament which would enable charities to become incorporated without the existing burdens of making full company accounts report. The sooner it is implemented the better.
I would like to see less red tape.
It is a burden and a hassle and it costs money but they have to be able to show they are responsible and acting

legally and being good stewards of the money.
Not aware of any real problems. The burden is placed on the accountants. This causes a lot of stress.
Onerous complex and over burdensome.
Over regulated, far too many regulations to comply with/ ties up valuable time.
People's hours haven't changed. I'm not sure what is done with the information, no one has ever checked it. Very demanding. We have to be investigated more because we are a charity.
Regulations have been and are increasingly onerous and are not particularly helping in the administration of a charity.
SORP 2005 - is overcomplicated, have to apportion out times for different activities which has added to time taken for admin. Reduce levels of precision of allocation of time.
System is required to be simplified.
Tedious. We come into smaller charities, only about 2 million pounds. The actual processes are the same; there are no concessions for a smaller charity. We have limited resources and it puts a huge amount of pressure on us. The threshold of 10,000 pounds does not make sense. There should be some form of regulation; there could be a progressive level for small, medium and large something like that.
The amount of time spent complying with the present regulations is a burden to the organisation, we could be spending their time on more important issues.
There is certainly over regulation and serves no useful purpose. Standardisation is not the way forward due to diversification of charities.
Time consuming activity to comply but can see the relevance of having to do so in terms of accountability.
Too much detail expected. Time consuming exercise.
Too much paperwork for smaller local branches of national charities.
Try to reduce the amount of paperwork required.
VAT takes up a lot of time.
Very time consuming to comply with ever changing regulations and requirements.
Would like less paper work regarding regulations.
<b>Difficulties with information returns</b>
Have difficulties in filling the forms for grants, smaller charities are overlooked by the government. Have difficulties to fill out e-mail address for public use without being given proper resources.
Simplification of automated passwords required to comply.
Simplified wording on the forms and return reports keep everything to a minimum.

They should simplify the regulatory affairs.

**Relevance of information**

Charity Commission insist that potential trustees must supply their date of birth otherwise they cannot be considered. Some people consider this to be irrelevant and an invasion of privacy.

Don't change so often. Helpful to have a consistent time of year to change the rules rather than changes when pleased. Collects information unnecessarily or which has already been passed on.

Far too many regulations, spend time complying with these and finds them completely useless!

For small organisations run by volunteers, it is a demand to keep track of regulations. In bigger organisations it is not that difficult. There are difficulties for small organisations to gain the information from local authorities. Sometimes it is back to determining very swiftly the information relevant to you as an organisation as there are larger organisation and the degree of scrutiny. When you look at the risk it is very daunting to understand the things that they want to do and it's not relevant to small organisation. The jargon in legislation can be a problem. In voluntary organisation it is not always understandable especially if you are not involved in that field. Make it simple and understandable.

Forms required to be submitted are too generic and do not always reflect the activities of specific charities.

Government deals with sufficient charities to be able to reduce paperwork at the first stage of a bid. All information is available through accounts etc .and detailed paperwork should be only necessary when bids are accepted.

I am not convinced that all the information which must be included in the annual return is really required, needed or useful to the Charity Commission.

I received a request for a trustees report to be furnished. This request was entirely vague and did not specify the required information or agenda.

It would be good if there were a simplified format of the annual report for small charities where much of the information which has to be included is neither appropriate nor applicable to small charities.

Level of information required is an onerous task and it serves no relevant purpose to charities but causes expense to charities to comply.

Required information from this trust in my opinion is totally meaningless.

Smaller charities are doing the same amount of paper work as the very big charities is this really necessary?

Some of the documents we have to present are pointless, not relevant for the obligation.

Some of the regulations may not apply to some specific charities.

The revised SORP, very slow in being given and also asks for information that isn't relevant beyond the scope of what is needed. Need to give more thought to the info that they are asking for. Questions are not geared to organisations that don't fundraise.

There is certainly over regulation and serves no useful purpose. Standardisation is not the way forward due to diversification of charities.

Too much duplication involved information requested should be meaningful and relevant; this is not always the

case.

What I'd like to see is a focus on getting info that is absolutely necessary. I appreciate there is a need to be accountable however legislation has gone too far in requesting too much detail.

### **Regulatory support**

Have difficulties in filling the forms for grants, smaller charities are overlooked by the government. Have difficulties to fill out e-mail address for public use without being given proper resources.

I have concerns with the Charity Commission having 2 separate offices (Liverpool and Taunton) - lack of communication between the two.

Instead of governing bodies criticising they should offer advice and assistance.

Over the last few years put one more burden after the other and its becoming to much for an organisation which is run entirely by volunteers. The Government could be more helpful to organisations such as ours as it's becoming more difficult to get funding.

Requirements are remarkably few as opposed to local authorities - the main problem is with the local authority, not central government.

The audit threshold for charities is far to low. All audits in the UK have to be conducted under International Standards of Auditing with no real idea how to do it.

They need to give clearer thought to smaller charities and reporting obligations in the smaller charities.

### **Duplication of information provision**

Combining of duty to provide information for Companies House and Charity Commission as this means we would only need to submit information once.

Fully automated process. It would be good if the process was fully automated. There is a lot of repetition of information from year to year and it would be better just to update a previous report rather than rewrite the whole thing.

Tendency to be too much reporting. For smaller charities it should be less than the large charities.

Too much overlapping in info required.

### **Changes in regulation requirements**

Constant change in regulations is extremely frustrating, time consuming and expensive.

Constant changes and audit and information is time consuming and incurs additional expense.

Don't change so often. Helpful to have a consistent time of year to change the rules rather then changes when pleased. Collects information unnecessary or which has already been passed on.

Frequency of change can cause unnecessary expenditure.

Statement of required practice should not be changed every 5 years, this causes distress and charities incur unnecessary expense.

They change the forms each year which slows down the process, would prepare some continuity.
Very time consuming to comply with ever changing regulations and requirements.
<b>Acceptance of regulatory burden</b>
Essential that the Charity Commission regulate charities.
Given our size it doesn't impact us too much. We depend and rely on accountants who do it for us. It's mainly in reporting back to us and making sure we are financially secure and competent and legal in the way we do things within the regulations. It hasn't been a problem for us, can't recall a situation where someone wanted to do something that wasn't within the regulation.
Given the size of the charity and its expenditure, administration is relatively simple.
I believe the time complying with the regulation for the Charity Commission is very reasonable, but the time required to comply with the requirement for the Companies House is unreasonable - about twice as much time is required to comply with the Companies House as with the Charity Commission. I hope that charities in the future will be free from the need to be registered companies.
I find the regulation fairly easy as it is only a small charity we have only limited funds.
Regulation is not over burdensome and we understand the need for it. No real complaints or suggestions for improvements.
Requirements are remarkably few as opposed to local authorities - the main problem is with the local authority, not central government.
There are much worse administrative burdens I can think of. This one isn't too time consuming.
Time consuming activity to comply but can see the relevance of having to do so in terms of accountability.
<b>Online / automated processes</b>
Anything online is a great improvement.
Fully automated process. It would be good if the process was fully automated. There is a lot of repetition of information from year to year and it would be better just to update a previous report rather than rewrite the whole thing.
It would be better if the process of returns were available online because a lot of information is repeated from year to year.
Submit the information online.
They could improve and reduce the process by computers.
<b>General positive comments</b>
Getting easier year by year.
I have no issues with info required by Charities Commission, but quite the opposite with the Arts Council's requirements.

It's such a small firm I do these accounts while running the day to day business.
Less control of business but in this case they've got it just about right.
New requirements have had a positive effect.
Positive changes have been made.
Recent changes have been an improvement.
<b>Solutions for improvement</b>
All charities should prepare a copy of their report every year, or should prepare a report for accountability every year.
Combining of duty to provide information for Companies House and Charity Commission as this means we would only need to submit information once.
Don't fill all the forms, just send audited accounts.
Don't make the procedure harder than it has to be. I understand that the legislation might be needed for those who have little or no experience of charities.
Government deals with sufficient charities to be able to reduce paperwork at the first stage of a bid. All information is available through accounts etc .and detailed paperwork should be only necessary when bids are accepted.
I believe the time complying with the regulation for the Charity Commission is very reasonable, but the time required to comply with the requirement for the Companies House is unreasonable - about twice as much time is required to comply with the Companies House as with the Charity Commission. I hope that charities in the future will be free from the need to be registered companies.
I think that all the regulation should be commensurate with the size of the organisation.
I think they should commensurate all the regulations accordingly to the size of the organisation.
It would be better if the process of returns were available online because a lot of information is repeated from year to year.
It would be good if there were a simplified format of the annual report for small charities where much of the information which has to be included is neither appropriate nor applicable to small charities.
Make questions on Charity Commission Annual Return the same as SORP accounting; this would prove invaluable and save time.
Over the last few years put one more burden after the other and its becoming too much for an organisation which is run entirely by volunteers. The Government could be more helpful to organisations such as ours as it's becoming more difficult to get funding.
Simplification of automated passwords required to comply.
Smaller charities are doing the same amount of paper work as the very big charities is this really necessary?
Smaller charities need more regulation.

Tedious. We come into smaller charities, only about 2 million pounds. The actual processes are the same; there are no concessions for a smaller charity. We have limited resources and it puts a huge amount of pressure on us. The threshold of £10K does not make sense. There should be some form of regulation; there could be a progressive level for small, medium and large something like that.

Tendency to be too much reporting / for smaller charities it should be less than the large charities.

The annual report is good discipline for charities - but the information needed pertaining to the market value of investment is very difficult to accurately arrive at and it would be helpful if the requirement/question were altered/restructured.

They need to give clearer thought to smaller charities and reporting obligations in the smaller charities.

They should make it as simple as possible. Also they should try to make it less complimenting.

They should simplify the regulatory affairs.

Understand there is going to be an Act to become incorporated without this burden, the sooner the better.

Would like to see more information regarding the changes in the statement of recommended practice obligations.

#### **Other**

Charity Commission insist that potential trustees must supply their date of birth otherwise they cannot be considered. Some people consider this to be irrelevant and an invasion of privacy.

Constant change in regulations is extremely frustrating time consuming and expensive.

Constant changes and audit and information is time consuming, incurring additional expense.

Daily requirements associated with the required compliance to regulation are becoming more time consuming and expensive to adhere to.

Frequency of change can cause unnecessary expenditure.

Fully automated process. It would be good if the process was fully automated. There is a lot of repetition of information from year to year and it would be better just to update a previous report rather than rewrite the whole thing.

It is a burden and a hassle and it costs money but they have to be able to show they are responsible acting legally and being good stewards of the money.

Level of information required is an onerous task and it serves no relevant purpose to charities but causes expense to charities to comply.

Statement of required practice should not be changed every 5 years this causes distress and charities in our unnecessary expense.

*Footnote:* In interpreting these responses, it is important to recognise that the interviews do not cover all of the obligations which have been measured as part of the exercise since two other approaches to measurement have been used, Expert Panel and Assessment. As a consequence, the responses may be affected by unknown biases.



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