



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

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Dear Mr Knight,

Update from the Charity Commission

On 15 July 2021, the Commission laid its [Annual Report and Accounts](#) for 2020-21 before Parliament. Alongside the publication of our Annual Report, we also published our Business Plan for 2021-22, and our latest research into public trust and confidence in charities.

As has been the case for many charities, businesses and public institutions, the Commission's work has been challenged and changed by the pandemic. Despite this, the Commission has continued to drive forward in implementing its strategy, making good progress internally and externally, while taking steps to ensure proportionate and effective regulation of the charity sector during, and after, the pandemic.

At the start of the pandemic, we took the decision to push ahead with our Business Plan as published. Some of the key achievements of the year include:

- Publication of a series of 5-minute guides for trustees, which have been popular with the charity sector, helping trustees to be 'certain in uncertain times'.
- The launch of an improved version of the Register. The changes we implemented have helped to increase transparency of the charity sector by making more information publicly available, including when charities pay employees more than £60,000 per year.
- Joint working with the Fundraising Regulator and Action Fraud on safer giving campaigns, reminding the public to donate to registered charities.
- The launch of the Revitalising Trusts Programme in Wales. Since the launch of the programme in England in 2018, we have revitalised over £50m to help charitable causes, including charities that are facing financial hardship because of the pandemic.

We know that this last year has been extremely challenging for the charity sector. As a responsible regulator, we have looked to reduce short-term regulatory burdens for charities and prioritise requests related to the pandemic. Steps we have taken, include:

- Registering charities directly linked to the pandemic quickly e.g. Exovent (a charity which creates negative pressure breathing support devices that can help people with diseases that affect their breathing, such as COVID-19).
- Working with government on the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 to allow for more flexibility around AGMs and insolvency rules.

- Providing new and updated guidance on financial reserves policies and virtual AGMs.

We have also continued to use our voice on behalf of the public. Where we have found serious wrongdoing in charities, we have articulated more directly why the failures identified matter, as was the case with our statutory inquiry into the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).

We also continue to emphasise the importance of safeguarding in charities. In June 2021, we issued a regulatory alert to over 5,000 charities operating in the international aid sector, which makes a series of recommendations and reminds charity leaders and senior managers that they must always place the highest priority on keeping people safe.

This year, we also committed to working to a series of [operational performance standards](#). These were designed so that the public and trustees can hold us to account for the services we provide. A summary of our performance is set out in our Annual Report and Accounts.

Alongside our Annual Report, we have also published our [Business Plan 2021-2022](#). In the third year of our strategy, we will continue to help charities to meet public expectations in the way they do their work, and to support them to maximise their impact in society. We have set ourselves four priorities to help us achieve this goal:

- **Priority 1:** We will help charity to deliver impact, especially as the country recovers from the pandemic.
- **Priority 2:** We will continue to deliver a step change in our robust approach to regulation.
- **Priority 3:** We will improve how we use data
- **Priority 4:** We will create the right environment to enable our people to more effective and to help make the Commission a great place to work

Finally, I wanted to share with you the key findings from [our annual research](#) on public trust in charities and what trustees think about their duties and public expectations. The key findings are:

- Overall trust and confidence in charities is continuing to recover after hitting an all-time low three years ago.
- Charities are among the most trusted groups in society, third only after doctors and the police.
- 60% of those asked say charities play an important or very important role, compared to 55% last year.

We welcome the research findings which suggest that trust in charities is continuing to recover after hitting an all-time low three years ago. But it is clear that trust remains fragile, and that charities must respond to underlying public expectations if they are to fully return to levels of trust last seen a decade ago.

If you require any further information about the Commission's work please do not hesitate to contact me, I would also be pleased to meet if you would find that useful. I can be contacted at CEO@charitycommission.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Stephenson CBE,
Chief Executive, Charity Commission for England and Wales