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Customer Charter

Our service standards



If you need any help to access this guide please email admin@charitycommissionni.org.uk and tell us what format you need so we can consider how to help you.

Who we are and what we do

Who are we?

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was established in June 2009 to deliver the legislative requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. The Act sets out what organisations must do to become charities, what obligations charities have to us and details our powers and responsibilities.

What do we do?

We are responsible for determining whether an institution is or is not a charity, maintaining a public *charity register*, identifying and investigating apparent misconduct or mismanagement within charities, and promoting compliance by charity trustees with their legal obligations.

We aim to promote:

- public trust and confidence in charities.
- awareness and understanding of the application of public benefit.
- trustee compliance with their legal obligations.
- the effective use of charitable resources.
- the accountability of charities to donors, beneficiaries and the public.

Who do we work with?

We work with the general public, with charities and a wide range of public bodies and other regulators.

Our service standards

We aim to provide high standards of service for all customers and stakeholders and welcome feedback to support improvement. Some Commission processes have their own standards for service and turnaround, in addition to the broad standards, which are available in the [relevant guidance on our website](#).

You are encouraged to contact the Commission with any queries or requests by sending an email to: admin@charitycommissionni.org.uk. If you require contact via telephone please add a contact number to your email and request a call back. We would urge charities and the public to only use the call back service for queries which cannot be resolved using our online guidance or forms available at www.charitycommissionni.org.uk

On the phone

Telephone enquiries are managed by NI Direct on behalf of the Commission. NI Direct aims to answer 85% of calls received within 40 seconds. Call handling arrangements are set up to enable NI direct advisors to deal with routine enquiries. A call or email back service is also available. You will be asked to provide contact details.

If you request a call back through any source (phone call, contact us form on the website or in an email to Commission staff) we will:

- call back usually with 5 working days from a withheld number.
- identify ourselves by name and Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
- listen to you.
- be professional and polite.
- answer your query on the call or advise you of a timeline for answering more complex matters.

If you request an email back we will:

- email back, usually with 10 working days,
- listen to you,
- be professional and polite
- answer your query at that time or advise you of a timeline for answering more complex matters.

When you email us we will:

- acknowledge/respond to you within 10 working days. This may not be possible during peak periods, when large numbers of charities are filing their annual monitoring returns.
- reply using a personal signature. However, we will use a generic email signature when:
 - sending out general correspondence to a large number of people.
 - where any member of Commission staff can deal with a query in its initial stages.
 - where any member of Commission staff can follow up on a query or ongoing issue.

If you request an email reply please check your junk folder in case the Commission's email has been directed there by your email account.

When you write a letter to us we will:

- adhere to the same standards as for a direct email and acknowledge/respond to you within 10 working days. This may not be possible during peak periods, when large numbers of charities are filing their annual monitoring returns.
- reply with clear and relevant information.
- advise you of any delays in responding to your query and provide a reason.
- respond to requests for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.
- enter your letter into our postal log and keep a record of your correspondence.

When you have an appointment with us we will:

- welcome you and make sure you are comfortable.
- be punctual, polite and professional.
- take account of your communication and accessibility needs.

If you are unhappy with our service we will:

- provide an effective complaints process and guidance.
- respond to your complaint in full within 20 working days.
- advise you of any delays in responding to your complaint and provide a reason.
- take account of, and learn from, your feedback.
- be transparent, open and honest.

When we make a decision we will:

- act in accordance with our objectives, general functions and duties as set out in sections 7-10 of the Act.
- advise you of our reasoning.
- provide you with information on our complaints and appeal processes.
- communicate clearly and timely.
- be transparent, open and honest.
- signpost you to another body if appropriate.

When we issue guidance we will:

- ensure it is clear, reliable, relevant and up-to-date.
- take account of your communication needs.
- ensure it is accessible to you taking your needs into account.
- ask for your views and listen to them.

When you access our website or social media we will:

- provide relevant, up-to-date information that is easily understood and accessible.
- encourage interaction and feedback.
- provide online self-service and user experience feedback tools.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools

The Commission may use AI tools to support our written communication with third parties. We use AI carefully and responsibly to help ensure that our communications are:

- clear and easy to understand.
- accessible and responsive to individual needs.

When AI tools are used, we will ensure:

- all decisions remain human decisions – AI does not make any regulatory or other decisions.
- human oversight – all AI assisted outputs are reviewed by a member of staff before being shared externally.
- transparency - we will make clear when AI tools have supported our communications.
- Only AI tools in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) systems are used – these operate within shared services with established security, governance and data protection controls.
- personal data is handled lawfully and proportionately – any processing of personal data by AI tools is in line with data protection requirements, policies and the Commission’s legal obligations.

Customers with particular needs



A mobile induction loop device is available for meetings in various venues. All of our guidance is available through our website, which is compatible with text-reading software, can be viewed in various contrasts, includes options in other languages. We can also provide guidance printed in large text and in alternative formats for example Braille or sign languages.

Please contact us if you have any special requirements. Our contact details are listed at the end of this document.



Talking to you

Feedback

It is important we receive comments and feedback from all our customers and stakeholders.

This will help us to improve our services and ensure we are responsive to your needs.

We will carry out regular surveys to gauge your satisfaction with the service we have provided to you, in addition your comments are welcome at any time by contacting us individually.

Complaints

We are committed to providing the best service we can. If you want to complain we will ensure your complaint is treated seriously and fairly.

You can do this in writing or by completing our online complaints form, available on our website at [Complaints and services standards | CCNI](#).

We aim to respond fully to your complaint within 20 working days and will investigate all complaints thoroughly.

Further details on our *Complaints about service* can be obtained on our website: [Complaints and services standards | CCNI](#)



What we expect from you

We expect you to:

- provide us with any information we request from you, within the time specified.
- be realistic when you apply to, or make a request of, us. We are a small team and will make every effort to deal with your application or request as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- send any queries to us in a timely manner, particularly if they relate to your annual monitoring return. An unanswered query with the Commission is not a valid reason for failure to file your annual monitoring return on time.
- afford our staff the same level of courtesy that you expect from us.
- be professional, honest and open with us at all times.
- provide us with feedback which may help us to improve the service which we provide.

As our offices are not public offices and staff have work commitments, unscheduled callers will be advised to seek an appointment.

Dealing with unacceptable behaviour from members of the public

The Commission expects its staff to be able to conduct their business in a safe and non-threatening environment.

The Commission does not view actions or behaviour as unacceptable simply because a complainant is assertive or determined. We also understand that individuals may act out of character in times of difficulty or distress. However, unacceptable behaviour from members of the public will not be tolerated and we may take appropriate action, where necessary.

General telephone enquiries to the Commission are managed by NI Direct and monitored according to NI Direct's *Call Recording and Quality Monitoring Guidance*.

What do we mean by unacceptable behaviour?

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- any act of written or verbal abuse, including those of a discriminatory nature.
- threatening behaviour.
- intimidation.
- vexatious, unreasonable or excessively persistent communication or complaints.
- serious or persistent harassment.
- swearing or the use of foul language.
- rudeness including derogatory remarks.
- inappropriate cultural, racial or religious references.

In response to challenging or unacceptable behaviour the Commission may place restrictions on how it communicates with an individual. These restrictions will be proportionate to the behaviour or incident in question. Restrictions may be imposed in response to isolated incidents or to an accumulation of challenging behaviour over time.

Examples of restrictions which the Commission may impose include, but are not limited to:

- terminating a telephone call where the individual continues to be abusive, offensive or aggressive, following a request to stop.

- limiting telephone contact from the individual to specific days/times.
- restricting contact to a single, named member of staff who will deal with future calls or correspondence.
- restricting contact to written correspondence only.
- respond to emails using a generic email signature.
- refuse to deal with the individual except through a third party, for example a solicitor or designated advocate acting on their behalf.

If an individual's persistent or vexatious behaviour is consistently directed at an individual member of staff and they feel threatened as a result of this, the Commission's senior management team may refer the matter to the PSNI.

Contacting us



Email

The best way to contact us is by email via:
admin@charitycommissionni.org.uk

Online forms

You can contact using our online guidance or forms available at
www.charitycommissionni.org.uk

Telephone



If you need to speak to an advisor over the phone you can call us on **028 3832 0220** Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, except public holidays. Call handling arrangements are set up to enable advisors to deal with routine enquiries. A call or email back service is also available. You will be asked to provide contact details. Call back will be made from a withheld number.

Email is the easiest, cheapest and quickest way for you to contact us. We ask, if at all possible, that you not to write to the Commission, but to email us instead.

Post

If you are unable to use email you can write to us at the following address:

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

Marlborough House
Central Way
Craigavon
BT64 1AD