

The Charity Commission: Assistance for MPs



What is the Charity Commission?

The Charity Commission is the regulator for the 190,000 charities in England and Wales. We are a Government department, funded by the Treasury. However, we are not subject to Ministerial control and are specifically exempt from Ministerial direction. For these reasons we refer to ourselves as the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. We are responsible for the registration of charitable organisations and for ensuring that they comply with charity law. The vast majority of charities in England and Wales are small organisations concerned, for example, with running village halls, parks and community projects; we also regulate large national and multinational charities.

What is this toolkit for/how can the Commission help you etc?

When members of the public have concerns and complaints about a charity they will often get in touch with their MP. They may want to find out if their fears are justified, inquire as to how to make a formal complaint, or ask their MP to take the issue up on their behalf. This toolkit is designed to help you to deal with constituents' queries and to inform you of the best ways to get in touch with us.

How can I check whether an organisation is a charity?

We can help you to easily identify whether or not an organisation is a registered charity. Using our website, www.charitycommission.gov.uk, you can search for a charity by its name, registered number, the area in which it operates, or by a keyword such as 'cancer'. If the organisation you're interested in is a registered charity then you will also be able to access information about it, including their objectives, a list of their trustees and their financial history.

How can I keep up to date on developments in the charity sector?

If you want to be kept informed about what is going on in the charity sector then you can subscribe to our Parliamentary e-bulletin service. You will receive regular updates containing the latest news from the charity sector and information on up-coming Charity Commission reports and publications. You can also consult our public affairs site at www.epolitix.com/EN/Forums/Charity+Commission. We post all of our latest news, briefings and reports on this site as well as further guidance and advice for MPs and their staff.

What can the Charity Commission do to help me engage with my constituents?

From time to time the Charity Commission will launch campaigns to raise awareness of important charity issues or warn the public about bogus charity collectors. As an MP you can help us to publicise these issues in your local media or putting information on your website which highlights your concern and offers advice to constituents. We may send out example press releases as part of our campaign which you can use to support your engagement with constituents on these matters.

What if I need more in depth information about a charity or the charity sector?

Our senior staff are always happy to meet with parliamentarians to brief them on an issue, to address specific concerns or to discuss the work of the Charity Commission generally. If such a meeting would be of use to you then please don't hesitate to contact our Parliamentary Office using the contact details below.