

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2026-29

1. Background

This strategy sets out a combined framework for OSCR's stakeholder engagement and corporate communications, supporting delivery of our Corporate Strategy.

Building on our previous strategies, it sets out how OSCR will develop our communications and engagement work to support confidence in OSCR's role as a regulator and public trust in Scottish charities. It will do this by helping charities and trustees understand and meet their legal duties, and by improving public understanding of OSCR's work.

It reflects OSCR's evolving operating environment, including our expanded regulatory powers, increased public and media interest, and high expectations of transparency and accessibility.



2. Strategic context

Effective communication and engagement are central to OSCR’s statutory role. They support:

- compliance with charity law through improved understanding and early engagement
- public confidence in charities and in OSCR as a regulator
- proportionate, intelligence led regulation
- efficient use of organisational resources

Since 2023 OSCR has developed its approach to communicating and engaging with stakeholders by prioritising the provision of clear guidance and improved and expanded digital communications, and by working closely with sector intermediaries. Over the period 2026–2029 we will develop a more explicitly integrated approach, recognising that stakeholder engagement and communications operate most effectively together.

This approach will be informed by the data and insight we gather and hold about the charity sector, helping us to target communications and engagement activity where it will have the greatest impact.

For the purposes of this strategy:

- communication is defined as OSCR-led activity that raises awareness amongst external stakeholders, i.e. the promotion of information to large audiences.
- engagement is the creation of a dialogue with external stakeholders that facilitates consideration of those views by OSCR in the undertaking of related activity.

Developing a joint strategy helps ensure a joined-up approach, sharing key priorities and messages.

3. Stakeholders

We recognise the role our key stakeholders play in helping deliver OSCR's corporate strategy objectives, including through collaboration, extending our reach, and supporting consistent messaging. They can be categorised as follows:

Charities and their trustees, who need to have a sound understanding of charity governance and the legislation which applies to them.

Stakeholders who act as intermediaries and can support OSCR with sharing information and providing feedback and sector insights:

- Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs)
- Umbrella and representative bodies (e.g. SCVO)
- Professional bodies

Stakeholders who work with charities:

- Scottish Government
- Local Authorities
- Other regulators
- Funders

Stakeholders with interest in the operations of OSCR:

- Scottish Parliament
- Scottish Government
- Audit Scotland and external auditors
- OSCR Board, Senior leadership team and staff

Those with a wider interest in OSCR's work:

- Individuals raising concerns
- General public (including charity beneficiaries)
- Media (general)

4. Strategic objectives

OSCR’s 2026–9 Corporate Strategy is developed around four main strategic themes, and this Communications and Engagement strategy align with these as detailed below:

Corporate Objective	Communications Objective
Driving compliance through proportionate and effective regulation	We will drive increased levels of compliance by providing clear, timely and accessible communications that help charities and trustees understand and meet their legal duties.
Supporting the development of a resilient, effective and trusted charity sector through regulation	We will protect and enhance public confidence in charities and OSCR by sharing learning and insight from our regulatory work, including the outcomes of our inquiry activity where it is appropriate to do so, and by working with trusted intermediaries and partners to deliver clear, consistent messaging to a diverse charity sector.
	We will enhance our online presence and digital communications to ensure that the public and charities can access the information they need.

Continuing to drive efficiency as a public body	We will support more efficient use of our resources by providing clear, timely and accessible communications about our work and the responsibilities of charities and trustees, ensuring charities and trustees have the information they need.
Supporting our people	We will ensure that our staff are supported to enable effective external communications, and well informed about our own work. Staff will have opportunities to contribute to the development of our communications and engagement activity.

5. Delivering our strategic themes

5.1 Clarity and accessibility

OSCR will continue to prioritise accessible communications, recognising the diversity of charities and trustees across Scotland. This is intended to help charities, trustees and stakeholders to understand what is required of them and support regulatory compliance across the sector, regardless of charity size, capacity or expertise. We will:

- engage with charities, trustees and stakeholders to inform OSCR's design of effective communications, drawing on their insight and expertise and focusing on user needs and customer journeys
- improve signposting and self service guidance

- ensure consistency across our communication channels (website, email, correspondence)

This approach will also reduce the need for follow-up contact by helping charities, trustees and other stakeholders access the information they need at the first point of contact.

5.2 Proportionate, targeted engagement

OSCR will take a more structured approach to engagement, targeting activity and messages where they will add most value and have the greatest impact. This is intended to ensure that communications reach the right audiences, are more relevant to their needs and responsibilities.

This includes:

- prioritising structured engagement with key stakeholders
- focusing communications and engagement where a targeted approach will be more effective

- aligning engagement activity with regulatory priorities and delivery planning

5.3 Partnership and intermediaries

OSCR will place strong emphasis on working with TSIs, umbrella bodies and professional advisers. This includes involving these organisations in the development of guidance and engagement activity where appropriate and providing training and information to help them support charities and trustees confidently and consistently.

This enables OSCR to:

- extend reach without duplicating effort
- reinforce messages through trusted channels in a consistent way
- gather insight on emerging issues and sector sentiment
- ensure our guidance is appropriate for those we regulate

5.4 Transparency and public confidence

OSCR will communicate openly and transparently. We will:

- ensure that the Scottish Charity Register is clear and up to date
- enhance our online presence and digital content
- explain what OSCR does and does not do
- share lessons learned from our regulatory activity, where appropriate

We will consider how we present information effectively to adapt to the changing technological landscape and how the public and individuals consume media and information. This will support informed public understanding and confidence, while helping people to understand when and how to engage with OSCR.

5.5 Internal communications and capability

Effective external communication depends on informed and confident staff who understand OSCR's work, know when and where to signpost

charities and trustees, and understand the role of third sector intermediaries in providing support. This supports consistent communication and engagement across OSCR by ensuring staff have the information and tools they need.

To deliver this, we will continue to focus on:

- developing internal communications which provide clarity on priorities, decisions and key messages
- ensuring staff have the information, tools and confidence to communicate consistently and signpost effectively

6. Monitoring and reporting

We will monitor the delivery and impact of this strategy to ensure our communications and engagement activity remains effective and aligned with OSCR's wider corporate objectives.

This will include using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures, such as digital engagement data, stakeholder feedback, and insights from our operational work, to assess how well our communications are supporting understanding and compliance.

We will use this information to inform continuous improvement, adapting our approach in response to emerging issues, changes in the sector, and evolving stakeholder needs.

Progress against this strategy will be reviewed through our existing performance and governance arrangements.

