

# SCOTTISH CHARITY REGULATOR CORPORATE STRATEGY 2017-20

Charities you can trust and that provide public benefit





# CHARITIES PLAY A VALUABLE ROLE IN ENHANCING LIFE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

## About Us

Scotland has over 24,000 charities of different sizes and wide ranging purposes including community groups, religious charities, schools, universities and care providers. Many people give their money and time generously to help charities, which play a valuable role in enhancing life in our communities and beyond, and in doing so help create a more successful and flourishing country. Around 180,000 charity trustees oversee the application for charitable purposes of the £11.31 billion total income which they generate.\*

As the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) we are responsible for the registration and regulation of all of the country's charities.

We operate independently of Ministerial influence or control, and our eight board members, who are accountable to the Scottish Parliament, are responsible for providing strategic direction. We are located in a single office in Dundee. Our Chief Executive, who is also Accountable Officer, leads a team of expert staff managing day to day operations.

## How we work

We strive to provide the highest level of service to all our stakeholders and to be the best organisation that we can, providing maximum public value.

To do this, each person who works at OSCR understands and is committed to ensuring that our activities are:

**Independent**      **Accountable**

**Consistent**      **Transparent**

**Proportionate**      **Informed**

**Fair**

\* Excluding charities registered with Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) who operate in Scotland. (This figure was calculated from the total income of Scottish charities at the end of August 2016).



Our vision is of

# CHARITIES YOU CAN TRUST AND THAT PROVIDE PUBLIC BENEFIT

## Delivering our vision – What we will do

We have identified four strategic objectives that will help us to deliver our vision between now and 2020:

### Strategic Objective 1

Help the public to have more confidence in charities.

While many factors can help build and maintain trust and confidence in charities, our research has shown that there is a definite link between trust and regulation.

We have developed our understanding of what it is that drives public trust and confidence and this is allowing us to make sure that we are increasingly taking opportunities to contribute to this.

During the plan period we will continue to adopt a more targeted, risk-based approach to using our resources to ensure that we focus on addressing and preventing issues which are most likely to undermine public trust and confidence in Scottish charities.

We will encourage charities to become more transparent and open about their activities by stressing the positive impact this can have on confidence and reputational issues in and for their organisations; and make the information we collect about charities more accessible.

During the plan period we will expand our use of social media to ensure we engage with as wide an audience as possible.



## Strategic Objective 2

Help charity trustees to understand and comply with their legal duties.

Charity trustees are the people who have general control and management of a charity. They are trusted to look after the charity's assets and ensure that the charitable purpose is fulfilled.

We will continue to provide a wide range of information and guidance to help charities comply. We will also strive to ensure that we maximise the opportunities which digital delivery presents for us to use a range of communication mediums and styles to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

Our programme of face to face engagement meetings with trustees, advisors and the public will continue and through our joint work with other regulators and strategic partners we will seek to identify opportunities to maximise information sharing, and joint communication.

## Strategic Objective 3

Ensure registration and reporting is straightforward and proportionate.

We want to ensure that when organisations apply to be a charity, and when charities have to report to us, that the process and requirements are easy to follow for them. During the plan period we will expand the web-based services we offer, starting with the introduction of an online status application process. Ultimately, we want all transactional services to have an online option.

In accordance with our risk led approach to regulation, we will continue to move away from the routine annual check on all charity accounts to a more integrated system which also takes account of information available from a variety of sources. This should allow us to be a more proactive regulator, concentrating on sub sectors and charities that are posing a higher risk to public trust and confidence.

## Strategic Objective 4

Review and improve the way we operate and deliver services to all of our stakeholders.

We want everyone who interacts with us to experience a consistently high level of customer service and will continue to adopt a user-centric approach to all of our activities through the use of consultation events, user focus groups and testing.

We will seek to review and streamline key areas of our work and work to facilitate improved information sharing with other public bodies, so that process and information duplication can be eliminated. In terms of our corporate activities, we will aim to be an exemplar of best value and governance, complying with our statutory duties and responsibilities as a public body in a transparent and open manner. Through leading by example we hope to demonstrate and encourage best practice.



## The national operating context

The political, economic and technological environment in which we and charities operate is in a period of exceptional turbulence. We expect this to continue throughout the life of this plan.

### Political

The detailed impact of the Brexit vote is still being considered. With the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on March 29, 2017, we know that the latest that Britain can leave the EU is April 2019. Until the outcome of detailed negotiations emerge over the coming months and years, we can only speculate as to the policy, financial and personnel impact of the change for ourselves and for stakeholders.

We acknowledge that these uncertainties make planning for the 2017-2020 period extremely challenging, both at a strategic and operational level.

Uncertainty also exists around the possibility of a second referendum on Scottish independence and when it might take place.

### Technological

The Scottish Government's recently refreshed digital strategy for the country is centred around ensuring that Scotland becomes recognised throughout the world as a vibrant, inclusive and outward-looking digital nation. OSCR, charities and many of our other stakeholders have a role to play in delivering this vision. We will work with experts to monitor the development and implications of new and emergent technologies, challenging old ways of thinking about the services we offer and how these are delivered.

Digital transformation can disrupt traditional jobs and industries, put new pressures on the privacy of our data and it has the potential to create new forms of social exclusion; but it also presents huge opportunities for improvement and efficiencies in the way we operate and deliver services. This aspiration provides the context for all of our activities during the 2017-2020 period, and equally will impact upon the activities and work of our stakeholders and partners.

### Equality duties

Advancing the equal opportunities agenda is critical to us. OSCR's board and senior management team have made a commitment to advancing equality. Our equality duties arise from the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010.

As outlined in our [Equality Strategy 2016-18](#), meeting our equality duties will underpin all of our work and actions throughout the life of this strategy as we carry out our regulatory functions, service delivery, policy development and duties as an employer.

We are committed to encouraging equal opportunities, eliminating unlawful discrimination and fostering good relations among all people.



## Resources

### People

OSCR's 55 staff are our primary resource. We are committed to their support and development. We want all our staff to be proud to work for OSCR and will support them to do their job to the best of their ability by working flexibly and corporately.

We place considerable emphasis on staff development and wellbeing, using the Public Service Improvement Framework model to identify learning and cultural skills gaps. We want our people to have the skills and information they need to carry out their work. Our staff will engage with each other and with stakeholders in a positive and constructive way.

We recognise that the national operating context can be unsettling and confusing. Over the plan period we will work to develop a flexibly skilled workforce and closely monitor the welfare of our staff.

### Money

As a non-Ministerial department, we appear as a separate entity in the Parliamentary Budget Bill. Our annual accounts are not consolidated, but are considered by the Auditor General prior to being laid before Parliament.

We are funded solely by Government and do not charge charities for the services we provide. The CCEW is currently consulting on a range of possible charging options in respect of its services. Whilst this is not something which we are actively considering, we await the outcome of the consultation with interest.

Like all public bodies, for the past few years we have operated on the basis of a single year budget which results from the complex negotiations between the Scottish and UK Governments, taking account of devolved powers.

Whilst our annual budget has reduced since we were established, over the past three years it has remained more or less static at £3.0m, a figure which has also been confirmed for the 2017-18 financial year. As a relatively small organisation based in one location, our greatest area of expenditure is on our staff, with the remainder of our funding being used to pay for our running costs and to support digital transformation.

During this plan period we are committed to enhancing online services. Our greatest financial challenge will be funding this work. In order to do this, we will streamline current processes and strive to introduce operating efficiencies to generate resource efficiencies which can be re-aligned to meet new priorities.

Details of future funding will emerge on an annual basis throughout the life of the plan, so a key part of our financial management process includes scenario planning for the future.



## Resources continued

### Environmental impact

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 is the key driver for our improved environmental and sustainability performance. We publish an annual Carbon Management Plan (CMP) which sets out the activities we will carry out to reduce our emissions. During the plan period, reductions will be achieved mainly through the use of technology, with staff being encouraged to use video conferencing, Skype and teleconferencing rather than travelling to attend external meetings in person, when appropriate. We also encourage staff to use public transport wherever possible. As we move to online services, we also generate efficiencies in terms of paper use, printing and postage – all of which impact positively on CO2 emissions generated.

OUR ANNUAL CARBON  
MANAGEMENT PLAN SETS OUT  
THE ACTIVITIES WE WILL CARRY  
OUT TO REDUCE OUR EMISSIONS



## Public service reform

During the plan period, our work as a public body will be undertaken within the context of the Scottish Government's corporate expectation of public bodies. We will comply with the following legislation.

[Public Service Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)  
[Public Records \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)  
[Regulatory Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)  
[Freedom of Information \(Scotland\) Act 2002](#)

## Reporting on progress

This Corporate Strategy sets out our direction of travel over the coming three years and provides the context for our Business Plan, which is produced annually.

Our [Business Plan](#) details the specific activities we plan to carry out each year to deliver our strategic objectives; and progress against the activities is monitored and reported.

In addition, we publish [monthly performance statistics](#) on our website in respect of a number of key activities.

In line with the duties placed on OSCR by the Public Service Reform Act, we also make a number of [financial disclosures](#) in respect of certain spend we incur each month.

Finally, our [Annual Review](#) document provides a brief retrospective overview of key activities and events each year.

You can find all of our reports at [www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk).

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