OSCR
Scottish Charity Regulator

Charity accounts – file on time!

It's the time of year when many charities are working on their annual report and accounts in preparation for filing these with OSCR before the deadline.

Around 40% of charities have a 31 March financial year end, meaning that the deadline for filing their accounts is 31 December. This means that December is often a very busy time for us responding to queries from charities that need a little assistance and receiving submissions.

We would like to encourage charities that have a deadline of 31 December, or around that date, to make sure that they have their accounts finalised and filed with OSCR along with their annual return well in advance of the deadline. Our office closes between Christmas and New Year meaning that it will be difficult to get last minute help if you have any issues.

Remember, we have lots of guidance available to help you:

- **A Guide to Charity Accounts** - this explains all of the requirements if you are not sure about what accounts you need to prepare, or whether you need an independent examination or audit
- **Receipts and payments workpack** – for charities preparing R&P accounts, we have templates available to make it easier for you to get it right first time
- **Trustees' Annual Report guidance** – the story of the charity is so important and a good trustees' annual report can benefit the charity in many ways
- **Independent examination** – guidance for trustees on what independent examination is and when it is needed in addition to guidance for those carrying out independent examination work
- **Annual return guidance** – to help you complete your online annual return, explaining what the questions mean and how to answer them.

Please file early where possible to ensure you can get any help you need.

Code of Fundraising Practice

The new **Code of Fundraising Practice** came into force on 1 October 2019. It outlines the legal responsibilities and additional standards expected for charitable fundraising across the UK. The Fundraising Regulator has responsibility for the Code.

This is the first major redraft of the code in nearly 10 years. Improvements have been made to the style, presentation and accessibility to make it easier for charities to understand the standards expected of them when fundraising.

To help with these changes the Fundraising Regulator has produced a **mapping document** and **deletions and mergers log** to show where old rules and sections have moved to. This will be available online until November 2019.

Charity fundraising in the UK is governed on a self-regulatory basis. Under self-regulation, individual charities are the first point of call for any complaints about fundraising practices. Where a charity is unable to resolve the complaint, the complainant can escalate it to one of the following:

- In Scotland, it is **Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel** with the secretariat provided by the Institute of Fundraising Scotland (IoF).
- In England and Wales it is the **Fundraising Regulator**.

OSCR's **fundraising guidance** highlights the duties of all charity trustees under Scottish charity law and how these duties can apply to fundraising. It sets out the rules that charity trustees must follow when their charity carries out fundraising activities, whether small, occasional fundraising or as its main source of income

Charity trustee information and guidance pack - BETA

Our website has a suite of guidance available for charity trustees covering many different aspects of charity life.

To help trustees know what guidance is most suitable for them, we are trialling a new **Charity trustee information and guidance pack**.

Before downloading a pack, you need to answer a short questionnaire to help us put together a set of guidance that will be most relevant for you.

In addition to detailing what guidance you should read, the BETA

pack contains:

- information on what charity trustees need to do
- an overview of annual monitoring
- 10 key points to running a charity
- sources of help and advice
- information on publicising that you are a charity
- information on when to tell us about changes to your charity.

The pack provides you with the basic information that can help you be an effective charity trustee. We've tried hard to tailor it for you because we know there is a lot of information out there and it can be hard to know what is relevant. However, to make the pack as useful as possible we would really appreciate your feedback. Please let us know what you think by emailing communications@oscr.org.uk with any views.

You can access the Charity trustee information and guidance pack BETA here.

New developments in Charities SORP

The Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice on Accounting and Reporting by Charities) sets out the financial reporting requirements that apply to almost all charities preparing accounts designed to give a true and fair view.

Earlier this year, a review of the process used to develop the Charities SORP concluded and a series of recommendations were made to the SORP-making body which OSCR is part of.

The review, which was chaired by Professor Gareth Morgan, recommended a number of changes to how the requirements of the SORP are developed in the future. Specifically there were a number of recommendations indicating that the SORP needs to better support the needs of smaller charities and to consider more about the needs of both users of the SORP who are preparing charity accounts as well as users of charity accounts who are seeking information.

Changes to the SORP development process are therefore going to be made and this will hopefully make charity annual reports and accounts as helpful as possible for the people that use them. To help do that the SORP-making body, which includes our own Laura Anderson, are going to be recruiting a new SORP Committee and plan to have a process of engaging with different stakeholder groups to understand what they need from charity accounts and the SORP, so that they can consider how the SORP can meet those needs.

The new approach will involve having different conversations with the stakeholder groups – not starting off with talking about accounting standards but about what these stakeholder groups need from accounts and the SORP. So it presents an exciting opportunity to look at how the SORP can work better for charities.

More information was published on the SORP website recently and can be viewed here. This includes information about how you can express interest in applying to become a member of the new SORP committee or in being involved in our stakeholder engagement work. By registering your interest now, you will ensure that more information is sent to you once it becomes available

Videos from Meet the Scottish Charity Regulator

Every year, OSCR holds events across the country to give charity trustees and staff the opportunity to hear about our latest developments, meet our staff and board and have a chance to ask us questions.

Our **YouTube** channel now has a video of the event presentations, filmed when we visited Dunfermline in August.

View our full Meet the Regulator 2019 video here.

Alternatively, you can view videos of the Meet the Regulator presentations separately by clicking on the links below:

- **About OSCR**
- **Governance Matters: Making your charity stronger**
- **Trustee recruitment and succession planning**

BSL videos from the event are also available on the channel.

Political Campaigning

Political campaigning – for example taking a position for or against a change in policy or legislation – is a legitimate way for many charities to achieve what they were set up for, their charitable purposes.

Under Scottish charity law, your charity can campaign if:

- it is advancing your charitable purposes
- your governing document does not prevent the activity
- you are not advancing a political party and,
- you can show you are acting in the charity's best interests.

However, an organisation set up to be a political party or to advance a political party cannot become a charity.

To help you understand the rules, OSCR has **general guidance for charities on campaigning about political issues**. In the form of Frequently Asked Questions, the guidance is aimed at supporting

charities in meeting the requirements of electoral and charity law.

Sometimes charities will need to comply with Electoral law and **the Electoral Commission has produced new guidance** that supports charities to campaign with confidence all year-round. The Commission has worked closely with charities to produce this resource, using real-life **case studies** to provide clear, authoritative advice to campaigners.

OSCR Annual Review

We've just published OSCR's Annual Review 2018-19 on our website.

This page is a summary of some key pieces of work from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, and draws on information from our **Annual Report and Accounts**.

Click here to go to the Annual Review 2018-19.

Notifiable Events Webinar

From 1 April 2016, we started asking charities to report Notifiable Events to us.

A **Notifiable Event** is when something serious has happened or is happening to the charity. We don't want to know about every event, only those that threaten to have a significant impact on the charity or its assets. By doing this, we want to encourage charities to deal with issues quickly and effectively to prevent them from becoming a serious problem for the health of the charity and, potentially, for the wider charity sector.

In a new webinar, OSCR Head of Engagement Jude Turbyne speaks about the Notifiable Events regime and how it benefits charities and the public.

View a recording of the Notifiable Events webinar here.

Charity Fraud Awareness Week 2019

Like all sectors, charities are susceptible to fraud and can be seen as easy target for criminals. Fraud and cyber crime is on the rise, which is why it's important for charities of all shapes, sizes and types to protect their income and

assets by building strong defences.

International Charity Fraud Awareness Week, which runs from 21 to 25 October 2019, will encourage and empower charities to talk about fraud and share best practice.

The award winning campaign is led by a coalition of over 40 charities, regulators, law enforcers, representative bodies and other not-for-profit stakeholders from across the globe.

The main aims of the week are to:

- raise awareness of the key risks affecting the sector
- promote and share good counter-fraud practices
- promote honesty and openness about fraud.

Find out more about International Charity Fraud Awareness Week here.

Introduction to Fundraising Course

The **Institute of Fundraising** are running a number of Introduction to Fundraising Courses across the country.

If you need to understand the basics of fundraising, this course may be for you.

The aim of the course is to get you up and running. You will:

- be introduced to rules governing fundraising and how it has to be carried out legally and ethically
- learn some of the basic terminology fundraisers use day-to-day
- discover how to build a budget and be made aware of the importance of measuring the return on a given activity.

Find a course near to you and book online here.

Remember our registration logo

Did you know that we've created a personalised 'charity registration' logo to help you show the public that you're entered in the Scottish Charity Register?

You can download the logo pack free of charge and use it on your charity's website, email signatures and publications.
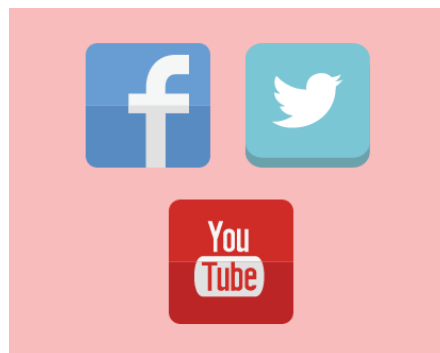
The logo comes in two shapes and different colours.

Find out more about the registration logo here.

We're on social media!

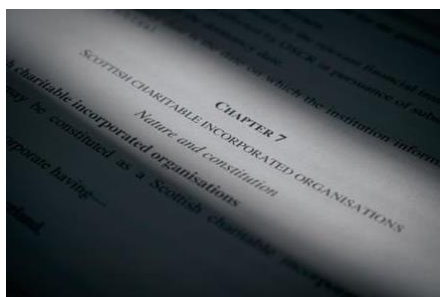Do you or your charity use social media?

Following us is a great way to be kept up-to-date with our latest news. It's also a good opportunity for you to share your experiences and views with the regulator and, through us, the wider sector.

In addition to our ever growing library of **YouTube videos**, we put regular updates out on our **Facebook**, **Linkedin** and **Twitter** channels.

Why not give us a follow?

SCIO Research Insights

The Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) is a specific legal form for Scottish charities. It is regulated solely by the OSCR and offers the benefits of incorporation without the complexity of company law. In the eight years since it was introduced it has become the most popular legal form for new charities and the fastest growing group in terms of numbers. Earlier this year we commissioned Braw Data Ltd to carry out an analytical study of SCIOs. We wanted to know how SCIOs are shaping the Scottish charity sector, and in turn, how this was influencing our work.

This study combined data from the Scottish Charity Register with other OSCR data to provide insight on the characteristics of SCIOs compared to other legal forms.

Read the research report 'Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) An Empirical Review' here.