



Charities which fail to comply with registration obligations are undermining public trust and confidence

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Charitable organisations which are not complying with their legal obligations to register and keep their registration details up to date, are directly undermining public trust and confidence in the wider charity sector, the CEO of the Charities Regulator, John Farrelly, warned today.

“All charities should now be registered on the Charities Register and should have provided up to date details,” Mr Farrelly told charity leaders at the Wheel’s annual conference in Dublin. “If your organisation is not registered and its registration details are not up to date, not only does it raise a question as to whether the public can trust you, but you are also in breach of the Charities Act.”

The Charities Regulator has begun targeting these organisations, he said. Over the last year, working with the Revenue Commissioners, they had removed 704 charities from the Charities Register. During that period, 966 new charities had been registered.

“Our regulatory approach is, and will continue to be, proportionate, targeting our resources and effort at the areas of highest risk,” Mr Farrelly said. “Our intent is that all charities will comply with the law with the least amount of regulatory intervention.”

The Charities Regulator did not place a major reporting burden on organisations, he noted, requiring only that small charities register and keep their register details up to date, while larger charities are required to provide additional information and may be required to provide audited financial statements.

“The register provides a transparent source of information for donors, beneficiaries and the public,” Mr Farrelly said. “It is our intent that an ordinary person can access the register on their computer or mobile device, examine any registered charity, and decide if they want to support them with their time or money. Compliant, well run charities will benefit from this approach.”

The Charities Regulator has recently signed an agreement for work to redesign and maintain the register in a user-friendly and searchable format. “In the coming months we will be launching a publicity campaign to encourage the public and donors to use the register,” he said.

Mr Farrelly told the conference that well intentioned, well informed and engaged trustees were the key to well run charities. “Decisions by trustees must closely guard the charitable purpose and activity of their organisations from any potential private benefit, exploitation or indeed fraud,” he said. The Charities Regulator would work hard to support and encourage these trustees.

“However, where required, we will continue to use our harder powers to make unwanted, self-serving behaviour less likely and less attractive,” he warned.

The Charities Regulator was working on a number of initiatives to support trustees, including the launch of the first of a series of guidance documents in the coming weeks to assist trustees in their duties.

“The twin tracks of ensuring compliance with the law and supporting trustees in their role are key to improving the governance, management and administration of charities,” Mr Farrelly said.

For more information: email press@charitiesregulator.ie or contact Eamon Timmins, Head of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, at 01-6331517 or 087-7520978.

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