

Issue seven, autumn 2016

Northern Ireland's charities amongst the most trusted in the UK

Almost 80% of people in Northern Ireland have a medium to high level of trust and confidence in charities, according to the latest research from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Launched last month by Communities Minister, Paul Givan MLA, the research revealed an average trust "score" of 6.2, indicating that Northern Ireland's charities inspire the trust and confidence of the public.

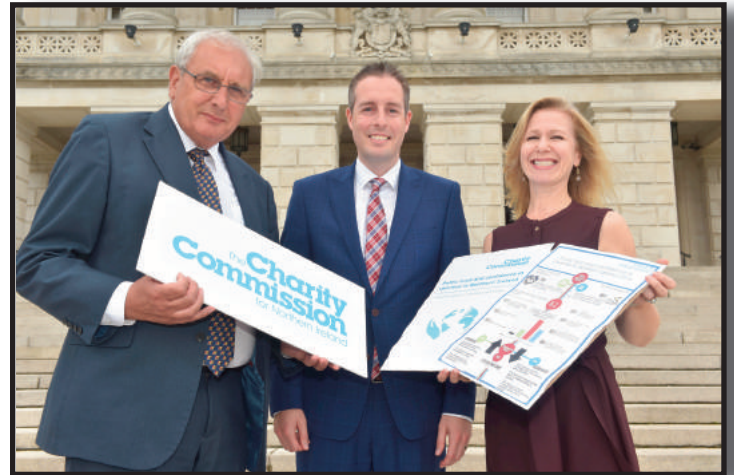
This compared favourably to England and Wales, where the average score has decreased from 6.7 in 2014 to 5.7 in 2016, highlighting Northern Ireland charities as amongst the most trusted in the UK.

Commenting on the research, Minister Paul Givan said: "Increasing and maintaining high levels of public trust and confidence in charities is crucial in terms of sustaining all of the good work that they provide for our communities.

"I am pleased that the research shows that 79% of those surveyed locally report a medium to high level of trust and confidence in charities.

"Growing or maintaining these levels requires not only effective regulation but commitment by all of those in the charity sector to adopt and practice good governance and transparency."

The Commission undertook the research – the first of its kind from the regulator – to track the public's attitude to charities, including what influences trust levels and views on charity regulation.



At the launch of the Commission's new research are Chief Charity Commissioner, Tom McGrath CBE; Communities Minister Paul Givan MLA and Commission Chief Executive, Frances McCandless.

And the results showed that the public's confidence in the work of charities remains high, with 79% of respondents reporting a medium to high level of trust in charities.

This translated into on-the-ground support, with 90% of respondents to a survey, carried out in early 2016, revealing they had supported a charity in some way in the six months leading up to the research.

The most common method of support was donating money to a street collector (51%), followed by donating items to a charity shop or charity appeal (43%).

**Continued on page two.*

Top charity tip

Are you thinking of joining the trustee board of a charity? Read the Commission's *Running your charity* guidance to find out how you can prepare for the role.

Public trust and confidence research launch



**Continued from front page.*

Over one fifth – 21% - had supported a charity through a direct debit.

Chief Charity Commissioner, Tom McGrath, commented: "I am delighted to see that, despite some respondents feeling their trust and confidence had decreased recently, Northern Ireland's charities are still amongst the most trusted in the UK.



"With the Commission having now been established for just over seven years it is also good to see that 94% of people feel proper regulation of charities is important to them.

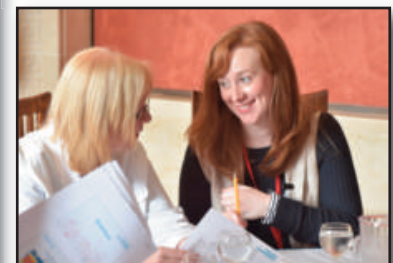
"Using this research as a benchmark, the Commission will continue working to ensure the charity sector is effectively regulated, helping to reaffirm public trust and confidence in charities."



The full research report, as well as smaller, snapshot reports focusing on specific areas and the research data in table format, are available in the *Research reports* section of www.charitycommissionni.org.uk.

Further snapshot reports will be added to the website over coming months.

Pictured are some of the attendees at the launch of the Commission's new research at Stormont on 6 September 2016. Images by Harrison Photography and Caoimhe McKeown.



Annual public meeting 2016

The Commission would like to thank everyone who attended our *Annual public meeting 2016*, which was held in Lisburn's Island Arts Centre on 19 September 2016.



Public meetings are an important opportunity for the Commission to share our progress during the year, as well as to hear from some of our stakeholders.

We were pleased to see such a good turnout this year, which marks the second time the Commission has held an annual public meeting.

We would also like to thank our guest speaker, Dr Oonagh Breen, from University College Dublin.

Dr Breen delivered an interesting and informative presentation on the topic *What does good governance in a charity look like?*



There were also updates on key areas of the Commission's work, including annual reporting by registered charities, charity investigations and registration.

If you would like to find out more about the Commission's progress in recent years, including the 2015-16 year, visit the *Annual reports* section of www.charitycommissionni.org.uk to access all our annual reports in full, as well as summary documents.

Good Governance roadshow

A series of seminars, offering charities advice and information on the latest developments in charity regulation, are taking place across Northern Ireland this autumn.

The Commission, in partnership with the Developing Governance Group, is undertaking the free seminars, which began on 3 October 2016 with an inaugural event at NICVA in Belfast.

The seminars will take place in various venues across Northern Ireland in conjunction with local support networks.

Frances McCandless, Commission Chief Executive, commented: "The Good Governance seminars are an ideal

opportunity for anyone involved in a charity to find out more about the new annual reporting regulations and, vitally, what those regulations mean for their charity."

As well as providing an overview of charity annual reporting, each seminar will present the newly revised Code of Good Governance.

Places at each seminar are limited. For information on where the seminars are taking place and how to book see www.charitycommissionni.org.uk

To find out more about the *Code of Good Governance*, which sets out the principles of good governance for boards and community and voluntary organisations, see www.diycommitteeguide.org

News and updates

Commission to launch customer satisfaction survey

The Commission aims to provide the highest possible standards and quality of service to all stakeholders, with our commitments to service standards set out in our public *Customer charter*.

To support stakeholders in sharing their views on how the Commission is performing, the Commission is launching its first *Customer service survey* on Tuesday 18 October 2016.

The survey is designed to capture key information that will provide a baseline for future research and a forum for stakeholders to provide genuine, confidential feedback.

Anyone interested in taking part in the survey will be able to do so by completing a short online or hard copy form, which will be available on the Commission's website from Tuesday 18 October 2016. Alternatively, you may wish to request a telephone interview.

The survey will be open until Wednesday 14 December 2016, with more details, including how to take part, available on www.charitycommissionni.org.uk following the launch.

New guidance

New or updated guidance or resources for charities, now available on the Commission's website, includes:

- Updated *Trustee declaration and Main contact details form*, for registration
- Updated *Consents for charitable companies guidance*



HMRC publishes list of common tax mistakes

HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) has published a list of the most common tax mistakes made by charities.

The statistics, from HMRC's Charities Outreach Team, show that the main error made by charities relates to their failure to inform HMRC when personnel change or new employees are appointed. The second most common mistake is charities claiming incorrect amounts under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) income.

According to HMRC, charities enter the total donations collected rather than the total eligible amount. If charities collect donations greater than the maximum specified amount for the year, (£5,000 up to 5 April and £8,000 from 6 April 2016) they should only enter the maximum amount rather than the actual amount collected.

Other errors include:

- out-of-date GASDS claims
- errors completing the paper claim form
- claims for non-qualifying donations.

More information on these commonly made mistakes is available at HMRC Charities outreach report, available at <https://www.charitytaxgroup.org.uk/news-post/2016/feedback-hmracs-charities-outreach-team/>

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