

Dear Sir/madam,

I am a postgraduate at the University of Cambridge, currently researching the history of charity formation and practice. I have been an executive officer of a number of charities and continue today in a voluntary capacity as a fundraiser.

I welcome the opportunity provided by this consultation process. The matter of particular interest to me could be taken under Q.10 under the first Theme: making a difference for the public benefit. However, I believe it merits separate treatment under Q.14, Are there any items you would like to add in to the report or accounts? If so, what are these items and how would their inclusion help the user of the report and accounts?

The current SORP regulations contain several references to the 'impact' that the charity in question makes on those it seeks to benefit. Their inclusion is both welcome and important, and my comment in passing here is that more of this sort of reporting might be made mandatory, rather than discretionary.

However, that area of reporting I would like to see added is an assessment and statement by the trustees on why they believe that the benefits delivered by their charity is the best possible use of the available funds, compared with other charities in the same field and any other public or private organisations seeking to serve the same beneficiaries. As I recognised above, it is healthy that charities should measure the impact they have on their intended beneficiaries (and any other stakeholders). But I would be surprised (and troubled) if any charity was unable to demonstrate some level of impact as a result of their efforts. However, we need to go a step further and, having ascertained that a charity is having some sort of impact, evaluate that impact against that of other charities, as well as other non-charitable bodies, to ensure that it represents good value for money. Funding and other resources for charities are finite, yet the number of charities continues to grow, and while I don't doubt that the vast majority are created and run with the best intentions, any 'overlapping' in function and service delivery can create (gross) inefficiencies. For the sake of beneficiaries, donors and indeed employees and volunteers, trustees should not only measure the impact of their charity, but ensure that it represents good value-for-money when compared with others.

This, I believe, will encourage charities to

- 1) implement 'best practice' in the way they conduct their activities;
- 2) provide Continuous Professional Development and training for their staff and volunteers;
- 3) seek economies of scale where charities can collaborate (e.g. in back office activities, printing, etc.);
- 4) continuously reevaluate not only whether they are a going concern financially but whether their consumption of limited resources is in the best interests of their intended beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders.

I hope the above is of help.

Yours faithfully,

Simon McNeill-Ritchie
University of Cambridge

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