

In this section

About us

Manage your charity

› Annual reporting

› Authorising transactions

Changing your charity's governing document

› Changing your charity's name

› Consents for charitable companies

Developing a reserves policy

Industrial and provident societies guidance

Making payments to trustees

› Mergers and closures

› New powers for unincorporated charities

› Requesting a scheme

› Register your charity

Using and understanding the register of charities

▼ Registration support

Helper groups

Registration tutorial video

Registration timescale change – FAQs

Religious designation

Serious incident reporting: a guide for charity trustees

Schools and charity registration in Northern Ireland

Update your charity's details

Start up a charity

Concerns and decisions

Charity essentials

Charity Search

Charity Details



Home / Manage your charity / Registration support / Registration timescale change – FAQs

Registration timescale change – FAQs

The following FAQs are aimed at covering common queries in relation to the new submission timescale of 30 days for registration applications.

If you would like more detailed information on applying for charity registration, please see the Commission's [registration guidance and support tools, which are available here](#).

While the Commission does not provide template or sample registration applications, you can view the questions in advance via our [online tutorial, which is available here](#).

All organisations notified in advance of their likely call forward date (the date on which they are issued with a password to begin their application) are invited to a registration workshop. These workshops are voluntary but the Commission has found that attendance has been very beneficial to applicants, helping to take away the "fear factor" and support them in submitting a strong application.

★ Questions

Please click on a question to be brought to the specific answer or scroll down to read all the questions and answers.

1. [What is changing?](#)
2. [Why has the Commission made this change?](#)
3. [When will the change take effect?](#)
4. [How long did organisations previously have to submit a registration application?](#)
5. [When will the 30 days start?](#)
6. [I submitted an expression of intent, is this not my registration application?](#)
7. [When will my organisation be called forward to apply?](#)
8. [Do I really need to prepare in advance?](#)
9. [How can I prepare for my application in advance?](#)
10. [Will you issue a deadline reminder?](#)
11. [What impact will the change have on registration applicants?](#)
12. [Have you made this change because of GDPR?](#)
13. [I received an email from the Commission saying you anticipate calling my organisation forward to apply for charity registration in two months' time – what does this mean?](#)
14. [Why can't I start my application earlier – and have a longer time to complete it?](#)
15. [I missed my submission deadline and now I can't find my application?](#)
16. [I'm not going to be able to complete my application in 30 days, what can I do?](#)
17. [I have been waiting for a long time to apply for registration – why can't get an indication of when I can register?](#)
18. [I would like to apply to register as soon as possible – can you fast track my application?](#)
19. [How long will it take to complete the application form?](#)

20. [Where can I get help with my application?](#)
21. [How long will it take for you to process my application?](#)

★ Answers

1. What is changing?

In order to increase the number of organisations which are called forward by the Commission to apply for charity registration the Commission is:

- reducing the application submission timescale to 30 days
- introducing a system of advance notification, with applicants advised at least one month in advance of when the Commission anticipates they will be called forward to apply for registration.

The move means more organisations will be given an opportunity to apply for charity registration, enabling those who are keen – and ready – to be registered to do so.

2. Why has the Commission made this change?

The Commission has made the change in order to increase the number of organisations which are called forward to apply for registration.

We are aware that there are organisations which are keen to progress with submitting a registration application and are patiently waiting to hear from the Commission so that they may begin the process.

With our experience having shown that most applicants wait until close to the deadline before submitting their application, changing the submission timescale presented an opportunity to potentially speed up the call forward process, while still managing the number of applications received at a given time.

Previously, each applicant had three months in which to submit an application but was given no prior notification of when they were likely to be called forward by the Commission to apply. Under the new system, applicants are advised at least one month (more usually two months) in advance of receiving notification from the Commission that they may start their application.

The impact should therefore be minimal on the applicants, who are strongly encouraged to use the notification period to prepare for their application in advance. However, by reducing the submission timescale, the Commission will be able to call forward applicants at a faster rate, working through the current list of organisations waiting to apply.

3. When will the change take effect?

The policy change is already in place – 40 organisations were notified in April 2019 that the Commission anticipates calling them forward to apply for charity registration in June 2019.

Those 40 organisations, which will be called forward to submit an application from June 2019, will be the first applicants required to abide by the new 30 day submission timescale.

4. How long did organisations previously have to submit a registration application?

Prior to the policy change, applicants had three months (90 days) in which to complete and submit their registration application. However, applicants did not receive any advance notification of when they were likely to be called forward to apply and there were very few applications received by the Commission in the early stage of this 90 day period.

5. When will the 30 days start?

The 30 day timescale will start with day one as the day you receive your notification calling you forward to apply for registration, which will include a unique password to allow you to access the online application form. You must complete and submit the form within 30 calendar days of this date.

6. I submitted an expression of intent, is this not my registration application?

It is compulsory for all organisations which are charitable and operating in Northern Ireland to apply for charity registration when called forward by the Commission to do so. They must also ensure that the Commission knows that they are operating here, so that they can be called forward in due course.

Submitting an expression of intent form ensures the Commission has your organisation's name and contact details. The form is not an application to register as a charity.

Once you have submitted an expression of intent, your charity's name will be added to the publicly accessible "[combined list](#)" on our website. This is a list of all the organisations of which the Commission is aware which may be charities, and which will be called forward to apply for registration as part of a managed process.

You can check who is on the Commission's combined list and find out more information on how the Commission will manage registration on our website [here](#).

7. When will my organisation be called forward to apply?

Charities are called forward by the Commission in tranches to apply for registration as the Commission's resources allow. You can check who is on the Commission's combined list and find out more information on how the Commission will manage registration on our website. If you are not on the combined list please complete an [Expression of Intent form](#) immediately to provide your details to the Commission. Please be advised this is not an application for registration.

8. Do I really need to prepare in advance?

Charity registration is a legal assessment of whether or not an organisation meets the definition of charity, as stated in the *Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008*. There are certain criteria which the applicant must demonstrate they meet in order to be assessed as a charity.

Taking the time to prepare in advance means you are less likely to be asked for more information or clarification, and your application is therefore more likely to be progressed quickly and smoothly.

That is why the Commission strongly encourages all applicants to take the time to prepare for the application in advance, including gathering any required information and signatures.

9. How can I prepare for my application in advance?

The Commission has created a wide range of online and face to face support aimed at helping organisations to prepare for registration. This guidance can be viewed on the Commission's website [here](#), and includes a [registration tutorial video](#), providing an overview of the online charity registration application form, and a registration workshops for registration applicants.

The workshops are currently invitation only and are for organisations which the Commission is intending to call forward to register. Each workshop is approximately two hours long and is intended to provide an overview of the online registration process and the *Purposes and public benefit toolkit*, available below, to support applicants to complete their registration application.



CCNI EG067 Purposes and public benefit toolkit

Download [PDF \(615.4 KB\)](#)

You may also wish to consider approaching one of the number of groups and umbrella organisations that are listed on our website as having volunteered to be [helper groups](#), providing practical support to individual organisations going through the registration process.

This support will vary depending on the ability and remit of each helper group and can range from providing access to a scanner or the internet to providing guidance where training, resources and time permit.

Prepare your documentation

If you have been invited to attend a registration workshop, the Commission strongly recommends you begin to prepare the documentation required for registration at this stage, if you have not already done so. This includes:

- an up-to-date governing document
- bank details and statement
- your most recent annual report
- financial accounts
- details of each of your trustees including current and previous names, contact details and date of birth
- trustee declaration (available above)
- a list of any policies to identify those relevant for registration, for example, working with children or vulnerable people.

A useful tool to ensure you have the required documentation in advance of completing your application is our document and information checklist (available below) which you can print and tick off as you gather documents or

information.



20160616 Document and information checklist

Download [DOCX \(15.5 KB\)](#)

10. Will you issue a deadline reminder?

Organisations will be advised of their final date for submission of a completed application as part of their call forward notification. Reminder emails will not be issued to applicants in advance of their registration application 30 day deadline.

11. What impact will the change have on registration applicants?

Overall, the Commission hopes the change will have a positive impact on applicants, while supporting the Commission to progress at a faster pace through the list of organisations waiting to be called forward to start their application.

12. Have you made this change because of GDPR?

The change has been made in order to streamline the application process and enable the Commission to call more charities forward to apply. However, the change in process also ensures the Commission complies with data protection principles, including how long we can retain personal data. If your application is not completed and submitted within the 30 day timescale it will, therefore, be deleted from the online application system.

13. I received an email from the Commission saying you anticipate calling my organisation forward to apply for charity registration in two months' time – what does this mean?

It is notification from the Commission that you are likely to be called forward to submit a registration application in the near future – usually one or two months after you received this initial notification.

The Commission strongly encourages you to start preparing for your application now using the materials on our website, and attending a registration workshop which your charity will be invited to attend. This will support you in submitting a registration application when you are called forward by the Commission to do so.

14. Why can't I start my application earlier – and have a longer time to complete it?

The Commission must carefully manage the application process to ensure that adequate resources are available in-house to deal with applications, which are a legal, and at times complex, decision making process.

The timescale change has been made to support the Commission in streamlining the application process and enable more organisations to be given an opportunity to apply for charity registration, enabling those who are keen – and ready – to be registered.

The change also ensures the Commission complies with data protection principles, including how long we can retain personal data. If your application is not completed and submitted within the 30 day timescale it will, therefore, be deleted from the online application system.

15. I missed my submission deadline and now I can't find my application?

If, after 30 days, you have not submitted your completed application, your application is automatically deleted by the system.

Organisations which have failed to meet their application submission deadline will also be identified on the Commission's combined list as *Failed to Apply - HMRC informed*. This will remain the status until an application is submitted.

If you have missed your deadline, you should contact the Commission as soon as possible via registration@charitycommissionni.org.uk

Please note that if you miss your registration deadline, your organisation will be go to the back of the queue of organisations awaiting call forward. It is, therefore, in your interests to ensure you comply with your legal duty regarding registration and meet the application deadline.

16. I'm not going to be able to complete my application in 30 days, what can I do?

If you are concerned that you will not meet your deadline, you should contact the Commission as soon as possible via

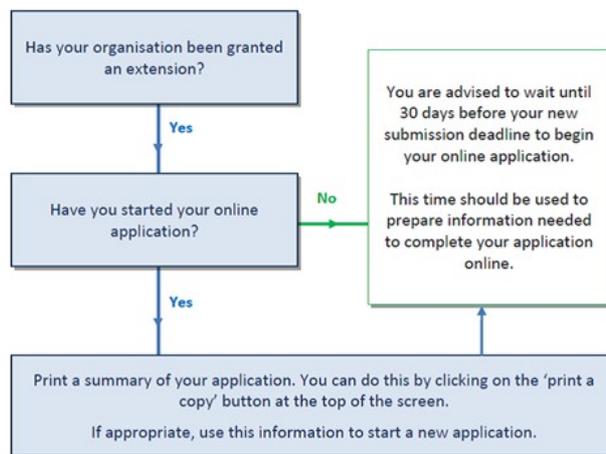
registration@charitycommissionni.org.uk

Requests to have an application submission deadline extended are considered on a case by case basis and are only granted in exceptional circumstances. All requests must be submitted in writing to registration@charitycommissionni.org.uk.

Please ensure you include contact details for the charity, the name of the charity and provide a clear reason why the extension is being requested.

If your organisation is not going to be able to submit within 30 days and you have been granted an extension by the Commission, you are advised to delay filling in your online application until 30 days before you are due to submit. However, please use the extra time to prepare all the information you need in advance of beginning your online application. If you have already started completing this online, you may wish to print a summary of your application.

You can do this by clicking on the 'print a copy' button at the top of the screen. This information may be used to begin the application again, as outlined in the following flowchart:



17. I have been waiting for a long time to apply for registration – why can't I get an indication of when I can register?

The Commission must carefully manage the application submission process to ensure that it can deal in a timely way with the registration applications it receives.

This is a managed process dependent on: staff resources, the quality and complexity of applications received, the need to request further information and other Commission priorities at a given time.

While the Commission endeavours to plan ahead with certainty as much as possible, this is not always feasible. The Commission is therefore working to manage expectations within a realistic environment, by giving applicants advance notification of one or two months, where this is viable.

18. I would like to apply to register as soon as possible – can you fast track my application?

Please complete the online [Expression of intent form](#), outlining any special circumstances which you think apply in your case. Please be advised that this is not an application for registration.

It is important to note that you must provide specific reasons why you are requesting that the Commission prioritises your organisation over others on the waiting list. You should also provide written evidence where possible. For example, while the *register of charities* is growing, funding bodies in Northern Ireland are normally content that you are on the Commission's combined list and therefore the Commission knows about your organisation for registration purposes. If, however, you have applied to a funding body and they have insisted on charity registration, you may ask the Commission if you can be called forward under special circumstances, explaining this as the reason and providing written evidence such as a letter to you from the funder.

The good work that your organisation does is highly unlikely to be successful as a sole reason for being registered early. Asking your MP or MLA to write a letter of support will not influence the process unless they are setting out specific reasons why waiting for registration is having a detrimental impact on your organisation over and above other organisations awaiting call forward.

19. How long will it take to complete the application form, from beginning to end?

We estimate that normally it should take no longer than 60 minutes in total to complete the online form. However, this depends on having all the information to hand and having used the supporting guidance, including our public benefit and purposes toolkit and list of documents, to prepare. These are available on our website [here](#).

It is not necessary to complete the whole application form in one sitting. You will be able to save the information you have completed and return to it at a later date within the 30 day period.

However, if, after 30 days, you have not submitted your completed application, your application will be automatically deleted by the system.

If you have missed your deadline, you should contact the Commission as soon as possible via registration@charitycommissionni.org.uk.

20. Where can I get help with my application?

The Commission is not able to help individual organisations complete their registration application.

We offer a wide range of [registration support and guidance on our website](#), including an [online registration tutorial for the completion of the online application](#), a public benefit and purposes toolkit, registration workshops for each tranche and guidance documents.

The Commission's website also provides signposting to [helper groups](#) and other resources which may be available to help with the practical elements, for example, your local library may be able to offer access to the internet and scanners.

If you have any problems relating to use of the online system or your password, refer to your letter calling you forward for registration for information, or email registration@charitycommissionni.org.uk

21. How long will it take the Commission to process my application?

The Commission will endeavour to process each application within five months of receiving a completed application, including all relevant documentation and further information. Our ability to process applications in this timeframe depends on the quality and complexity of the application. You can support the Commission in this process by using the online registration guidance and toolkits to prepare your application and ensure you provide all the relevant information and documentation at the point of submission.

