



Welcome to Focus On... our special quarterly bulletin looking at issues relevant to particular sectors and topics of interest.

In April's Focus On... Charities, we highlight how a new version of SORP is moving a step closer, as well as looking at how businesses can help good causes. Meanwhile, more than 50,000 charities have signed up to an online scheme to claim millions of pounds in Gift Aid. Finally, a new report has revealed that charities are not making the most of data to help with their fund-raising.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of our specialist charity audit and accountancy services, please contact Emma Murray, Audit and Compliance Partner at Nicholsons, at [emma.murray@nicholsonsca.co.uk](mailto:emma.murray@nicholsonsca.co.uk) or phone 0845 27 66 555.



## Online Gift Aid claims total £380m

More than 50,000 charities have signed up to Charities Online to claim millions of pounds in Gift Aid.

The internet-based system for claiming Gift Aid has slashed the time taken to process payments charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) receive from 29 days to nine.

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) said that more

than 50,000 organisations out of 70,000 that claim Gift Aid have so far received more than £380 million in Gift Aid repayments through Charities Online since its launch in April 2013. The biggest online claim by a single charity so far was for £3.7 million.

Charities with no access to the internet can still claim using a paper-based system, but must use

a new form, ChR1, which can be ordered from the Charities Helpline on 0845 302 0203.

If you would like more detailed advice on any aspects of Gift Aid – including the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, which allows charities and CASCs to claim top-up payments on cash donations of £20 or less without the need to collect Gift Aid declarations – please contact the specialist charities team at Nicholsons.

## New SORP comes another step closer

A new version of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP), the framework for charity accounting and reporting, is set to receive the green light in May.

In March 2013, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), the independent regulator that sets, monitors and enforces corporate accounting and auditing standards, issued a new financial reporting standard, designed to form the basis for accounting periods starting on or after 1 January 2015.

For the first time, the new standard addressed some key issues involved in charity accounting and reporting and the Charity Commission and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, which

together form the SORP-making body for UK charities, subsequently drafted a new SORP to incorporate its content.

The new draft also addressed the needs of smaller charities that choose to continue reporting under an existing Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities. The new SORP has been written in a modular style, which the authors hope will make it easier for charities to identify the parts that apply to them.

Charities were able to put forward their views on the draft SORP in a consultation that closed on 4 November last year. It attracted 179 responses, which have been taken into account by the SORP-

making body, along with feedback received at 26 consultation events.

The text of the SORP is due to be submitted to the FRC in March 2014 before it is approved for release by the FRC's board. It is anticipated that FRC approval will be received by the end of May 2014, with publication in electronic form as soon as possible afterwards.

The Nicholsons charities team can provide expert advice to charities seeking clarification when the new SORP is released and its implications for them. For more information, please contact us.

The current draft of the new SORP can be seen at [www.charitycorp.org](http://www.charitycorp.org)

## Businesses urged to back Give & Gain Day

Good causes and communities are set to benefit from 2014 Give & Gain Day 2014, which supports employee volunteering across the world.

The event aims to raise awareness of the importance of volunteering in work time and enable new participants to take up volunteering opportunities.

In 2013, 24 countries took part in Give & Gain Day and in the UK alone, more than 12,000 volunteers from 300 companies donated more than 96,000 hours of volunteering.

This year's event takes place on Friday, 16 May, and businesses are being encouraged to register their interest in taking part via the Business in the Community (BITC) website at [www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk). The aim is to clock up Give & Gain's 100,000<sup>th</sup> UK volunteer since the event began in 2008.

Businesses can arrange their own volunteering project or, for a small administration fee, BITC will match enterprises and their employees with a suitable volunteering project and offer support to help them get the most from Give & Gain Day.

National volunteering organisation Volunteering England says that employer-supported volunteering programmes – such as giving employees time off for their own volunteering activities or developing an ongoing arrangement between a business and a charity or community partner – make good business sense.

It says: "Consumers overwhelmingly prefer to buy from organisations that demonstrate their corporate social responsibility, employees are more motivated, engaged and learn new skills that they bring back to the workplace."

Charities looking for new ways to attract support may find it worth offering opportunities for employer supported volunteering, as a way to both directly support their work and build valuable links with the business community.

A report published in October 2013 by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University suggested that business giving to charities could be increased if relationships between the two sectors were developed and that charities needed understand that the giving of time, expertise, materials or space was as important as donating money or raffle prizes.

Nicholsons has a strong track record in supporting employee volunteering within the firm and can provide advice to businesses or charities interested in becoming involved in this type of initiative. For more information, please contact us.

## Charities 'fail to make the most of data'

More than half (57 per cent) of UK not-for-profit organisations are struggling to unlock the fund-raising potential of data they hold, according to a new report.

Data Driven Fund-raising, published by not-for-profit software specialists Blackbaud, said that the sheer volume of data generated in modern fund-raising could be "bewildering".

Blackbaud spokesman Azadi Sheridan said: "Data can be invaluable for fund-raising and marketing, but

not-for-profits must be able to analyse that data to get the maximum value from it. Not utilising social media data is a major missed opportunity to better understand supporters."

The research surveyed 338 not-for-profit professionals. Only 30 per cent felt they were doing a good job in using data for fund-raising and marketing while 70 per cent thought there was untapped potential in the data their organisations hold.

A total of 41 per cent agreed that poor data made it

hard for their organisation to engage with supporters while 24 per cent said that they struggled to manage the volume of data generated. Meanwhile, 34 per cent said a lack of technology resources affected their organisation's ability to achieve objectives.

The most common challenge relating to data and data integration was having to manually key in data from different systems, with 57 per cent of respondents citing this as an issue. Almost two in five (39 per cent) said their data was held in at least four different systems.

## Free charity seminars: have YOUR say

Nicholsons will be hosting a series of free seminars for charities this year and would like your input. Is there a burning issue affecting you or an associate in

the charities sector that you feel should be addressed at one of these events? If so, please let us know by emailing [emma.murray@nicholsonscs.co.uk](mailto:emma.murray@nicholsonscs.co.uk), where

you can also register your interest in attending. We will let you have further details of the events, including dates, times, venues and topics, in due course.

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