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New Voluntary Code for Charities

Charities have taken the first step towards drawing up a new code of practice in bid to boost transparency and raise public confidence in the industry.

The code, which has been developed by the industry's co-ordinating body Irish Charities and Tax Research, aims to provide guidance and a benchmark of good governance against which charities can measure themselves, as well as to clarify the roles, duties and responsibilities of board members and other governance bodies.

The code of practice is voluntary but the body is hopeful that most of the 5,700 charities operating in Ireland will sign up to it.

It believes the successful implementation of the statement of guiding principles for fundraising will show the charity sector is capable of self-regulation and pre-empt any need for statutory regulation, which is possible in the Charities Act 2009.

The code of practice covers all fundraising activities including door-to-door and street collections, telemarketing, direct mail, emergency appeals, internet donations, raffles, church-gate collections and bequests.

Five key elements of the new code of practice

- Charities commit themselves to the highest standards of good practice and ensure fundraising activities are respectful, open and legal.
- A donor charter will be introduced, which provides a "bill of rights" to donors, including their right to know about the causes for which

the charity is fundraising, how their donation is being used and if the fundraisers are employees of the organisation or third party agents.

- A complaints and feedback procedure will be set up to enable people to notify the organisation of their wishes, comments and complaints, with all feedback to receive a response within a specified timeframe.
- A monitoring group will be established, with a majority of independent members and an independent chair to actively monitor compliance with the code.
- Charities will produce an annual report and a statement of accounts, made publicly available every year.

Charities will have the opportunity to sign up to the code online, and the list of charities which sign up will be available publicly.

If you require any further information on how this issue might affect you or your organisation please contact us.

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