

## [News story: Annual return deadline imminent](#)

Charities with financial years ending on 31 March 2017 have less than four weeks to go before the final deadline to file their annual return.

By law, these charities must submit a return by 31 January 2018, no later than 10 months after the end of their financial year.

Thousands of charities have already filed their returns but there are still many that have not.

They run the risk of trying to file nearer to deadline day without the correct documentation or, crucially, the password they need to access the online service and then going into default.

To avoid the possibility of this happening, please either [file your annual return for 2017 now](#), if you know what you need to submit, have a current working password, know your charity number and have kept your [charities details, such as email and contact address and current trustees up to date](#).

Alternatively, please make sure you [know where your password is, or apply for a new one](#) (please note this will take at least 24 hours and can only be sent to the email address we have on file). Then [update your charity's details](#) before reading our [detailed guide into how to prepare your annual return, including what you need to submit](#), based on your charity's chosen structure.

[File your 2017 annual return now](#)

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## [Press release: British Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visits Kuwait](#)

British Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson visits Kuwait today, Wednesday 3 January 2018, for the first time since his appointment in November 2017. During his visit he called on His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also called on the First Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and congratulated him on his recent appointment.

This visit is an important opportunity to build on the excellent defence co-

operation between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom as part of the close and cordial bilateral relations which exist between our two countries. The United Kingdom welcomes the important role which Kuwait is playing in the region – as a key partner in the Counter-Daesh Coalition, as a major humanitarian donor and as a mediator in regional disputes – and more widely as Kuwait joins the United Nations Security Council for 2018-2019

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## **News story: Independent doctors to be rated by the Care Quality Commission**

New changes mean that, for the first time, all healthcare organisations in England that offer regulated care will be rated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Organisations will have to display their inspection ratings so patients can clearly see safety standards.

The CQC's current ratings programme – which covers hospital care, social care and GPs – will be extended to include more than 800 additional providers. This includes independent doctors that offer primary care online.

The CQC will require providers affected by these changes to publicly display their rating, for instance on their website or business premises. This will allow patients to make an informed choice when deciding which care service they want to use.

The ratings scheme has been 'future-proofed' to cover services that may develop in the future. It will ensure that new services are also given a rating.

The changes will bring the services in line with the rest of the NHS. It will reassure patients who use digital GP apps provided by independent doctors about the quality and safety of the service they are choosing.

The CQC will now develop an approach for how it will rate the additional services. The CQC will continue to inspect these services and publish its findings in the meantime.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

With our NHS now in its 70th year, we are planning ahead to guarantee safer and better care for patients in the years to come. These changes are a world first for patient safety, modernising our tough Ofsted-style inspection scheme so we keep pace with the changing landscape of healthcare, as well as helping tech-savvy patients to make informed decisions about their care.

Sir David Behan, Chief Executive of the Care Quality Commission, said:

CQC's ratings of health and care services are helping people to make informed choices about their care as well as supporting providers to improve. Never before has the public had such clear information about the quality and safety of their health and care services.

CQC already inspects and publishes reports for these additional services. The ability to award ratings to them will bring increased transparency for the public about the quality and safety of their healthcare.

We look forward to taking this work forward in the new year.

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## **Press release: Shoppers could face higher prices due to soft drink merger**

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been carrying out an initial investigation into Refresco's proposed \$1.25 billion (about £935 million) purchase of Cott's worldwide beverage manufacturing business.

In the UK, Refresco and Cott manufacture, package and distribute soft drinks for a number of well-known brands, supermarkets and shops.

Each business produces a range of different soft drinks, which are then packaged in a variety of formats and sizes. The CMA's initial investigation into the merger did not find any competition concerns for the majority of these products.

However, both companies supply juice drinks using a special aseptic production process that allows them to be sold preservative-free and without refrigeration.

Only one other competitor in the UK currently supplies third parties with juice drinks using this production process. The CMA is therefore concerned that, after the merger, the combined business might be able to increase prices or lower quality standards.

Rachel Merelie, CMA Acting Executive Director and decision maker in this case, said:

These companies supply well-known UK shops and brands with soft drinks, who in turn sell these to thousands of people daily. It is

therefore important that we address any issues to ensure that shoppers do not lose out.

We have looked at all aspects of this merger and have concerns that the merger could lead to reduced competition in the manufacturing and packaging of certain juice drinks. This may result in higher prices or quality standards slipping for stores and brands, with potential knock-on effects to end-consumers.

The CMA will now refer the merger for an in-depth investigation unless Refresco offers acceptable undertakings to address competition concerns.

All information relating to the merger is available on the [case page](#).

#### Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. Enquiries should be directed to the Press Team, on 020 3738 6191 or [press@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gsi.gov.uk).
3. For information on the CMA see our [homepage](#), or follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on merger cases.

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## [Press release: Commission listens to charities in making changes to the annual return for 2018](#)

The Charity Commission has made a number of amendments to the content of the annual return for 2018 (AR18), after an extensive consultation with charities throughout the autumn.

It says the new annual return will make for an easier user experience for charities, and stresses that it will be more proportionate than in the past, with many charities required to answer fewer questions, and only those with large or complex operations being required to provide more information. On average, charities completing the annual return will answer 15 fewer

questions than in the past.

In a [consultation report published today](#), the regulator also says it is grateful for the positive and constructive engagement it has had with charities and that it has taken into account charities' responses in making a number of key changes to the proposed content.

For example, the regulator is amending a proposed new question on income received from overseas. Only information about income from overseas governments or quasi-governmental bodies, charities and NGOs will be mandatory for the first year. This is information that relevant charities should already record and hold. Providing information about income from other overseas institutions and donors will be voluntary for the AR18 and then mandatory in following years. The Commission will also introduce a threshold for this information. These changes will ensure that charities can update their records and systems before the question areas become compulsory.

The Commission has also decided not to ask charities:

- whether they are claiming rate relief for the premises they use
- the amount of gift aid they have claimed (charities are already required to declare whether they are registered for gift aid, and the Commission will ask charities to provide their HMRC number)

The Commission says it requires these two pieces of information for regulatory purposes, but accepts that they may be available from other sources, and that it should pursue other options before adding to the reporting burden for charities.

Proposed new questions on executive pay in charities will be included in the annual return: AR18 will ask charities to provide information about the total remuneration received by their staff members, including salary, bonuses, pension contributions, private health care and other benefits in kind. The Commission will make public how many individuals receive total packages worth upwards of £60,000 in bands (in bands of £10,000 up to £150,000, then in bands of £50,000). The Commission will also require charities to provide information about their highest paid employee, but that information will be held for regulatory purposes, rather than made public.

**David Holdsworth, Deputy CEO and Registrar at the Charity Commission, says:**

The annual return is a vital tool in promoting charities' accountability to the public, donors and beneficiaries as well as ensuring we have the information we need to be an effective, proportionate, risk-led regulator. I am grateful to the charities that took part in our extensive consultation on the content of AR18. Today's report shows that we have listened carefully to charities' submissions and have made important changes as a result.

However, in some important areas, including around executive pay,

we will require charities to provide us with more detailed information. We know the public care deeply about transparency in this area, and it is vital that charities, and the Commission as regulator, respond constructively to these expectations. I am confident our decision in this area strikes the right balance between transparency and protecting the personal data of individual staff members in charities.

The Commission engaged in a wide-ranging consultation on AR18, including through targeted user testing. It identified groups of charities most likely to be affected by proposed changes and asked individuals responsible for completing the annual return to test the prototype digital service. The Commission says that it received largely positive feedback about testers' experience.

The Commission has also published the formal regulations underpinning the AR18.

The Commission is currently developing the digital service that will underpin AR18, and hopes to make the return available to charities within the next four months.

The annual return must be completed by charities with annual incomes of upwards of £10,000. AR18 applies to charities with financial years ending from 1 January 2018. Charities have ten months from the end of their financial year to complete the return.