

Focus on Charities, Social Enterprises and Not-For-Profits

Legal and accounting support
to help you find your way



Here to help you to help others

Our Charity and Civil Society Department is a recognised centre of excellence. Its highly experienced specialist accountants and legal advisers share your passion for effective delivery. Our clients range from major organisations with substantial assets, operating nationally and internationally, to volunteer-led local community groups.

Burton Sweet has a particularly strong and longstanding commitment to serving the charity, social enterprise and the civil society / not-for-profit sectors, helping both the organisations themselves and the professional advisers who assist them.

We are proud to serve a range of clients who together represent the diversity and vibrancy of these sectors, and to support their work for particular communities and wider society. Those clients include educational charities, churches and other places of worship, faith-based organisations, professional institutions, sports and social clubs, village halls and community centres.

Accounting, Audit, Independent Examination and Related Services

As well as preparing accounts that meet required reporting standards and carrying out audits and independent examinations, our specially trained accountants ensure that trustees are kept up to date about the financial and administrative benefits that their legal entity is entitled to.

Whether a major organisation with substantial assets or a small volunteer-managed community group, our team makes sure you are equipped with the knowledge and confidence you need to face both challenges and opportunities.

Legal Advice and Support

Charities and voluntary organisations are subject to considerable regulation and particular legislation. We help you deal with the many opportunities and challenges those present, including the important and sometimes difficult practical issues, the public accountability and regulatory scrutiny dimensions.

We guide you through the ever-changing requirements of charity and company law, so you can focus on delivering real benefits to those you exist to serve.

Specialist Support

Our experts are on hand to advise on all financial and legal issues:

Accounting, Audit, Independent Examination and Related Services

- Accountancy services
- Audit service
- Independent examination
- Financial and strategic planning
- Information technology
- Outsourcing of finance department
- Tax and VAT assistance

Legal Advice and Support

- Charity law and regulation
- Governance and membership issues
- Constitutions healthchecks and changes
- Public benefit reviews
- Establishing new organisations and registering new charities
- Conversions to alternative legal forms
- Charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs)
- Community amateur sports clubs
- Community interest companies
- Advice on fundraising and trading
- Trading subsidiaries
- Trustee training and board development and assessment



There is more common sense in this conversation than I've heard all year.

Case Study Accommodation Concern



Welcome home

Accommodation Concern is a charity dedicated to helping those who are homeless or in a precarious housing position in north Northamptonshire. It seeks to prevent the trauma, emotional, physical and financial cost of homelessness by delivering good quality, accurate and accessible advice, support, education, training and outreach. The aims are to help people to meet their basic housing needs and to realise their personal potential.

The challenge

The charity evolved from a shared vision to help people in housing need, in particular young people. A mix of people and organisations, including local day centres, clergy and councillors realised that prompt and accurate advice could help individuals make informed choices that could often prevent the personal and social costs of homelessness. As the charity reached maturity, against a background of severe economic pressures, significant increases in the need for housing support, major public policy changes and unprecedented changes in social welfare provision, the trustees recognised the need for change.

Accommodation Concern was unincorporated, so its everyday activities potentially exposed the trustees to risks of personal liability. In addition, the charity's legal form, constitution, governance structure and arrangements imposed various constraints on the charity and its trustees. These were inhibiting the charity's options for the future, especially development of innovative charitable services and new income-generating activities.

The solution

Burton Sweet's charity team guided the charity in its "conversion" to a new charitable company, helping the trustees understand the legal and regulatory issues involved and assisting them to carry out the practical processes. We also provided guidance on the key legal, regulatory, tax and VAT issues relating to trading activities by charities, as well as helping to establish and activate three new trading subsidiaries.

As the new structure came into being, we provided face to face training for the charity's board and senior staff. This helped them understand the key legal features of the new structure and feel comfortable with the charity's new legal form and constitution. It also gave them confidence in operating the charity under its new arrangements and in providing strategic oversight of the new trading subsidiaries.

A great foundation for the future

Accommodation Concern has a firm legal and governance foundation for its future, enabling it to serve those at risk from homelessness more effectively.

"Our grateful thanks for all the professional advice and support you have given us through a period of rapid and essential change By using your services, we feel we have invested wisely in the future of the charity."

Rachel Wilson, CEO, Accommodation Concern

Expert Advisers and Support



Ed Marsh

Title Partner – Charity Services
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Skills Charity accounting and reporting,
trustee training and advice

Ed heads up the Charities team and is a Chartered Accountant with extensive and varied audit experience. Having been awarded the respected ICAEW diploma in charity accounting, he advises on all aspects of compliance and regulation of the voluntary sector and has a large and varied portfolio of clients.

Ed is part of the senior leadership team and head of finance for a large group of churches and acts as a trustee for three local charities. A regular speaker at charity training events, Ed's particular expertise is in advising faith-based charities.



Cecile Gillard

Title Legal Manager, Charities
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Skills Charity and company law advice;
constitutions; governance; trustee
training; board development

Cecile is a lawyer specialising in charity and company law, regulatory, governance and constitutional matters, supporting charities, community interest companies and other social enterprises, civil society “not-for-profit” organisations and their professional advisors throughout the UK.

Cecile is a regular speaker at seminars and events, the author of several books on charity matters and leads many trustee training and board development activities.

Cecile is a volunteer trustee of three West Country based charities, a member of the Charity Law Association, Fellow of the RSA and an Affiliate of The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators.



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