

Reducing Regulations - brief response to National Audit consultation

Regulation needs to be proportionate and appropriate.

Regulation has to exist to protect staff, clients, volunteers and service users.

Staff regulation has to be a balance between employee protection rights and business continuity. Evidence across the world shows a happy, healthy workforce is more productive.

Clearly Health and Safety regulations are also protective. The organisation I run is a tenant and we would welcome better and safer facilities eg disabled emergency access, but the landlord and agent do not think they are necessary and refuse to pay for them. More obligation should be put onto landlords and their managing agents to ensure buildings are properly accessible and comply with best practice. We feel we have to fight to get things done.

As a Business we have to do returns to Companies House and these are not onerous; organisations who do not make returns in time are rightly penalised, but maybe the fine should be more proportionate to the size of the business, rather than a standard fee.

As a charity we are now in the position of being over- regulated by the Charity Commission who seem to focus only on the larger, national charities and issue guidance and obligations that can be disproportionate to follow. Each year we have to do returns in a different way. Clearly where there is public money involved we need to be open and transparent, but the same regulations do not appear to apply to private business, even when there is also public money involved.

We are not always consulted on regulations as Government and others don't always treat charities as businesses - yet we employ people, pay HMRC, observe and follow legislation, pay Business rates, hold leases or property, buy services, pay VAT and provide safe environments to deliver our business.

The Government seems to have forgotten about the national Compact and ignores best practice on information and consultation. The new Consultation principles are interesting, albeit somewhat hidden, and it would be helpful to have these actively promoted.

Any consultation has to be open and meaningful and be clear about the areas that are up for change, ideally responding to consulted afterwards on what has changed as a result of the consultation.

For instance I found out about this consultation by accident and it would have been helpful to have a briefing sheet, clear questions and an idea of the parameters of what was meant by 'reducing regulations'.