# AI drives record surge in charity registrations but raises concerns over readiness



The Charity Commission has received more than 1,000 applications for charitable status in a single month for the first time, with officials attributing part of the surge to applicants turning to artificial intelligence tools to complete forms.

Stuart Wood, the Commission’s head of registration, said AI is helping more organisations attempt the process but warned that many applications are being rejected. “AI-generated content tends to be overly generic, often failing to capture the specific aims or activities of organisations,” he noted.

Applications for charity status have been rising steadily since the pandemic, driven by financial hardship, community interest companies converting to charities, and responses to global conflicts and disasters. The Commission processed more than 9,000 applications in 2023–24, rising to nearly 9,840 last year. Between April and June this year, 1,101 charities were registered—though a similar number were removed from the register, highlighting the sector’s ongoing fluidity.

The wider sector is also adopting AI at pace. A Charity Digital Skills report found that more than three-quarters of charities are using AI in some form. Yet many appear ill-prepared to manage it responsibly. A Charity Excellence survey showed 60 per cent feel “extremely unprepared” on AI policies and procedures, while more than half lack the capacity to manage risks such as cyber security and data protection.

The Commission itself is exploring how AI might streamline registration. With new government funding due from April 2026, officials are reviewing how AI tools could support their services. Chief executive David Holdsworth has cautioned, however, that detecting AI-generated applications is becoming harder, and stressed the importance of protecting the integrity of the registration process.

In parallel, a new “charity AI task force” has been convened by the Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology (CAST) and Zoe Amar Digital to guide charities in adopting AI responsibly. The group will provide practical support similar to that offered to SMEs through the government’s digital adoption taskforce.

The developments reflect a sector in transition—keen to harness the benefits of AI but grappling with governance and trust. As Wood observed: “The charity sector isn’t standing still, and neither are we.”

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/commission-considers-using-ai-as-charity-applications-surge-to-1000-a-month.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://charitycommission.blog.gov.uk/2025/08/26/an-evolving-charity-sector/> - In this blog post, the Charity Commission's head of registration, Stuart Wood, discusses the evolving charity sector, highlighting the surge in registration applications and the challenges posed by AI-generated content. He mentions that in the 2023-24 financial year, the Commission processed over 9,000 applications, with this number rising to 9,840 in the following year. Wood also notes that AI-generated content often lacks specificity, leading to higher rejection rates. The Commission is considering utilizing AI tools to enhance its registration service as part of additional government funding from April 2026.
3. <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/charity-commission-regulator-receives-record-number-of-charitable-status-applications.html> - According to the Charity Commission's annual report, the regulator received a record 9,008 applications for charitable status in the year ending March 2024, up from 8,583 in the previous year. This increase is attributed to factors such as cost-of-living challenges and international instability. The report also indicates that 54% of applications were registered as charities, up from 48% in the previous year, and that at 31 March 2024, there were 170,056 charities on the register.
4. <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/record-number-charity-registration-applications-last-year/governance/article/1924966> - The Charity Commission's latest annual report reveals that it received a record 9,836 applications for charitable registration in the year ending March 2025, a 9% increase from the 9,008 received in the previous year. Over 5,000 organisations were registered as charities, with 86% of applications decided within the target of 30 working days, compared to 77% previously. The Commission also opened 112 statutory inquiries and concluded 77 in 2024/25, up from 89 and 65 respectively in the previous year.
5. <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/commission-ceo-concerned-about-ai-generated-applications-received-by-regulator.html> - David Holdsworth, CEO of the Charity Commission, has expressed concerns about AI-generated applications received by the regulator. Speaking at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales’ annual charity conference, Holdsworth acknowledged the potential benefits of AI in the sector but highlighted challenges in identifying AI-generated content. He noted that as AI improves, it may become more difficult to detect such applications, raising concerns about the integrity of the registration process.
6. <https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/new-charity-ai-task-force-set-up-to-improve-sector-s-ai-influence.html> - A new 'charity AI task force' has been established to promote responsible, inclusive, and collaborative uses of artificial intelligence across the charity sector. Convened by the Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology (CAST) and digital and AI consultancy Zoe Amar Digital, the task force aims to provide support similar to the SME Digital Adoption Taskforce set up by the previous Conservative government in 2024. The initiative seeks to address the challenges and opportunities presented by AI in the charity sector.
7. <https://fundraising.co.uk/2024/06/21/surge-in-use-of-ai-but-few-charities-ready-to-adopt-it-safely-effectively/> - A Charity Excellence survey found that while AI usage among charities has surged, most organisations are unprepared to use it safely and effectively. The survey revealed that 60% of charities are extremely unprepared in terms of policies and procedures for using AI, and more than half are unprepared to manage AI risk, including cyber security and data protection. Despite the high adoption rate, many charities lack the necessary frameworks to integrate AI responsibly.