

Working with Faith Groups – Feedback from Buddhist Charities

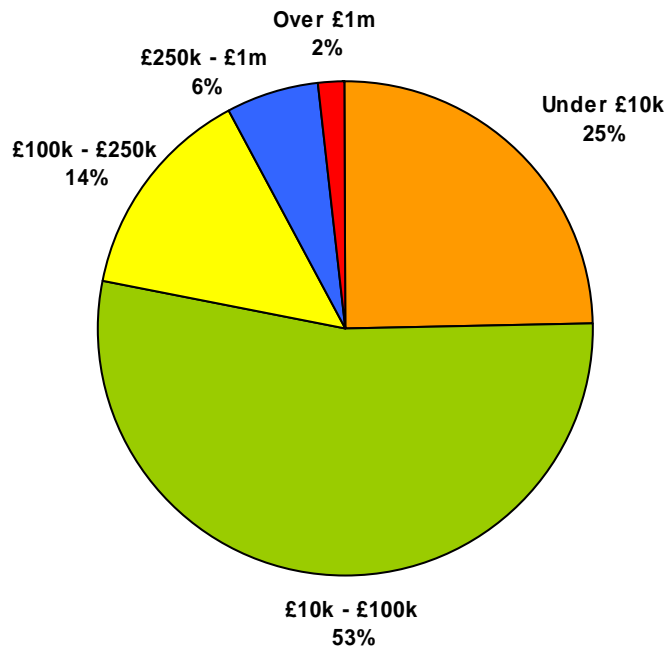


A picture of Buddhist charities in England and Wales:

There are approximately 246 Buddhist charities on the Central Register of Charities, with a combined income of around £27 million.¹

Breakdown of Buddhist charities by income band:

A quarter of Buddhist charities have an income under £10,000, and just 2% of Buddhist charities have an income over £1 million.



The rate at which Buddhist charities have been registering:

- 58 Buddhist charities have registered with the Charity Commission in the last five years, with an average of around 12 registrations a year.

The Longest Established Buddhist Charity

The Buddhist Society

The Buddhist Society was set up in 1924 in Westminster and it now produces classes and teachings of the major Buddhist traditions and its historical development. The charity has provided support to schools and teachers in the teaching of Buddhism. It welcomes visitors from around the Buddhist world and is a membership based organisation. For further details about the charity see: www.thebuddhistsociety.org

¹ The statistics are based on information taken from the Register of Charities in England and Wales October 2007.

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The Charity Commission's consultation with Buddhist charities:

The consultation event:

The Commission held an event at the Birmingham Buddhist Maha Vidhara on 13 March 2007. In total 60 delegates attended from 38 organisations. Delegates represented a huge variety of organisations from local groups like the East London Buddhist Cultural Centre to national bodies like The Anglo-Thai Foundation.

Key issues raised at the events:

The issues that delegates raised with us broadly fell within four common themes:

On communication:

- delegates would like better online support, guidance and signposting for faith-based charities;
- delegates expressed a strong desire for more face-to-face meetings and events between Buddhist charities and the Commission.

On fundraising:

- delegates felt that the secular nature of the Commission's accounting framework didn't recognise the spiritual nature of Buddhism, as it didn't recognise that monks or nuns effectively "run" charities but, because of monastic rules, are sometimes precluded from dealing with financial matters.

On trusteeship:

- delegates believed strongly that the Commission should support them in building a better understanding of trustee responsibilities and the governance of their charities.

On commission staff:

- delegates suggested that the Commission establish a single point of call for newly registered charities.

Feedback from delegates at the event:

"The most useful aspect was to learn about the commission's work, and its particular orientation towards faith-based charities."

"It provided an opportunity to give direct feedback/input to the Charity Commission about Buddhist charities particular needs and issues."

"[It was important] to meet staff who gave a human face to the Charity Commission and made me feel encouraged to ring and ask for help."

"We need similar type of activity on a regular basis."