



# Sharing knowledge for better charity regulation

**2021-23 Knowledge Management Strategy for the Scottish Charity Regulator**

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# Foreword

## **Welcome to our Knowledge Management Strategy for 2021-23.**

Knowledge is a valuable resource and a critical asset for any organisation. In the 15 years since taking up powers, OSCR has developed considerable knowledge through registering, monitoring, guiding and assisting Scotland's charities to meet the requirements of charity law. Effective knowledge management will help us make better decisions, make our work more efficient and ensure a well-regulated charity sector of well-run charities that are trusted by the public.






This document 'Sharing knowledge for better charity regulation' sets out the framework for knowledge management within OSCR and the key components that underpin effective knowledge management for OSCR.

Implementing this strategy is an ongoing process that requires continuing collaborative input from all of us. Our commitment to knowledge management is a recognition of the skills and expertise we have built as an organisation and a desire to ensure we are exploiting these to our full potential so our work contributes to better outcomes for OSCR, charities and the people of Scotland.

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**OSCR Head of Corporate**



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# Introduction

# Introduction

The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) is a knowledge community. We are a relatively small organisation with staff who have the expertise, experience and know how that helps us regulate the charity sector in Scotland. This document is for OSCR's staff and Board but will be published externally to share our commitment to meeting the knowledge management goals set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-23.

The **OSCR Corporate Strategy 2020-2023** states our Knowledge Management Strategy will place a greater focus on using knowledge and intelligence to develop the sector; and the **Business Plan 2021-22** says we will implement our plans to improve the use of knowledge and intelligence to support the future development for the sector, and drive positive change to charity law. Sharing and using information collaboratively across the staff teams will support and develop our people, improving the way that we work and our communications with the public and our stakeholders.

Knowledge management is something we all do every day, though mostly we don't think of it like that. In practical terms it is organising information, analysis and intelligence into something we can use and share to help us do our work.

We need to understand what, where, why and how we do the things we do, so that we can explain it to each other and to our stakeholders. There a number of reasons for this:

- We use our knowledge to positively influence and inform the development of national policy, legislation and practice
- We use our knowledge to inform our understanding of risk in the charitable sector
- We use our knowledge to target our regulatory activities and our support for improvement in the sector
- We are a high functioning public body, committed to delivering good quality services to the charity sector, and to improving the lives, wellbeing and safety of the communities and environment where we work and live
- We involve people in shaping and improving our work and our services, through consultations, user testing and reference groups, putting equality and diversity at the heart of all that we do
- Knowledge supports smart and flexible delivery of our activities to deliver best value
- We use our knowledge to inform the identification of strategic and operational risks and approaches to mitigate them
- We use and share our knowledge about charities to help lead and inform others.

All our staff are involved in shaping knowledge management work so that they can find the information they need when they need it; that the information is useful and usable; and so that information can be shared with others who need it in an easy and accessible way that helps everyone do their job effectively and contributes to improved outcomes within and outwith OSCR.

Knowledge management will be embedded throughout our annual operational planning process, and led by OSCR's Extended Leadership Team but much of the work will happen within teams

or in small scale specific activities.

Making best use of our knowledge and intelligence underpins the effective delivery of OSCR's regulatory functions and our wider engagement work. An important element of this work will be considering the lifecycle of our information, analysis and intelligence. Where it is necessary we will streamline the information we hold to improve efficiencies and increase accessibility.

## **Knowledge as a valuable resource**

Knowledge is a valuable resource and it should be treated in such a way that it can be captured, stored, shared and used as such. This strategy aims to provide the framework for improving our recording, sharing and use of knowledge in OSCR.

The strategy has three main parts:

- **Understanding knowledge management**  
What is knowledge management and what does it mean in OSCR's context?
- **Delivering and supporting knowledge management**  
Identifying the key areas that underpin our approach to knowledge sharing in OSCR.
- **Developing a knowledge sharing culture**  
Explaining how will we work together to make best use of our knowledge to improve our approach to charity regulation and to help lead and inform others.

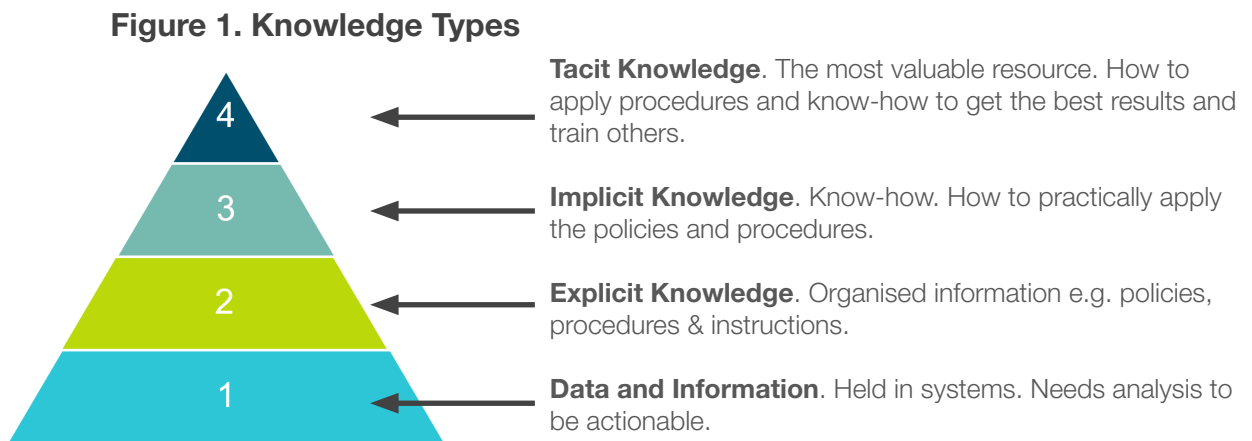
# Understanding knowledge management

# Understanding knowledge management

Knowledge management is the process of capturing, organising, finding, sharing and using what we know, what we do and the information we both create and hold to help us do our work.

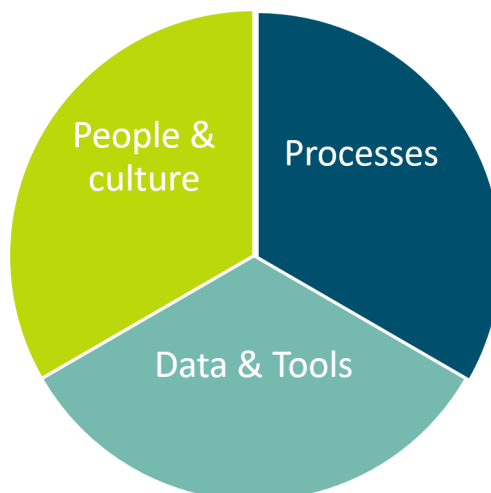
In the private sector it is focused on managing data and knowledge mainly to improve marketing, but also to increase productivity and efficiencies. OSCR has a responsibility to work effectively and efficiently, making best use of the knowledge and resources we have.

In any organisation there are different sources of knowledge. All of these are important for knowledge management, but some are trickier to capture than others (figure 1).



Knowledge management is a combination of many areas of work but there are three key components essential to its success:

**Figure 2. Key Components of knowledge management at OSCR**





**People & culture:** our people are at the heart of what we do and are key to understanding the importance of sharing knowledge to carry out their work. While technology and processes can support knowledge management, knowledge management cannot be effectively enacted without people. Culture shapes the relationship between individuals and the organisation which impacts on how effectively knowledge is shared, and we are positively promoting work practices which enable collaborative working to happen.

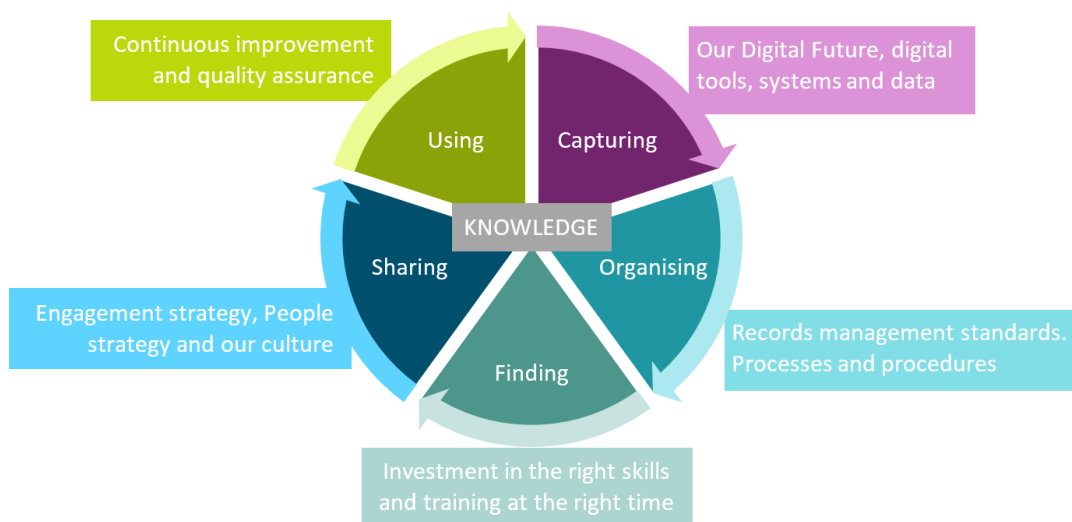
**Processes:** policies and procedures help us capture and utilise knowledge, but there are numerous ways of storing, organising and sharing knowledge. On a day to day basis, well documented processes will play a key part in helping us find and share knowledge more efficiently, building confidence and supporting informed, robust and transparent decision making.

**Data & tools:** data, or facts and statistics, is a key building block that informs both our work and the intelligence we share with stakeholders to support the sector. In the context of knowledge management it is important because it can help us and others make better decisions, make processes more efficient and contribute to better outcomes. Tools and technology support knowledge management, providing ways to organise information and make transferring and sharing it within and outwith OSCR easier.

### Knowledge management integration in OSCR’s work

Our Knowledge Management work will provide an opportunity to review, revise, innovate and improve working practices in a way that will help our daily work, and overall delivery of corporate objectives. Knowledge management crosses over with all areas of our organisation. Improvements to our digital skills and services, our internal processes and our people will be key enablers supporting how we use knowledge to regulate the charity sector in Scotland (figure 3).

**Figure 3. Knowledge management integration in OSCR’s work**



# Delivering and supporting knowledge management

# Delivering and supporting knowledge management

Our collective challenge is to turn the vast range of information, data and knowledge we hold into something useful that is easily shared across OSCR, informs our work and helps us achieve our **strategic outcomes** and **business plan priorities**. Effective knowledge management will also help us monitor performance, and inform our strategic planning.

Our knowledge management work will identify where knowledge sits, where we need to improve our use of knowledge; and work collaboratively to fill those gaps. This could include learning resources, training, internal communication, better use of tools and systems and succession planning.

To make our knowledge work for all of us it will be essential to integrate and embed our Knowledge Management Strategy by working collaboratively with colleagues in all areas of OSCR. Knowledge management is a multidisciplinary activity. Our approach to knowledge management and sharing knowledge is underpinned by our corporate strategies, quality assurance and our management of corporate and strategic risk:

## Digital

Digital tools are essential in how we capture, organise, find, share and use knowledge in OSCR. **OSCR's Digital Future 2019-2023** will support knowledge management by aiming to streamline our systems, enhancing public engagement, improving transparency and accessibility of our information. We will improve the quality and integrity of our data, ensuring data-informed decision making is at heart of OSCR's work.

## Engagement

Our **Engagement Strategy** supports the delivery of our current Corporate Plan through developing and embedding a shared approach to engagement across the organisation. It commits to building evidence-based engagement work, combining information and data from internal and external sources to build knowledge and understanding and to support charities to improve and to sustain these improvements. Our engagement activities are a key mechanism for sharing and acquiring knowledge to generate greater understanding of the sector and drive improvement.

## Records and information management

Records are a valuable asset and records management is closely linked to knowledge management, ensuring information is handled safely, organised effectively, shared appropriately and used easily. OSCR's records are a form of corporate memory of our operations as regulator and registrar of Scottish charities over time. When properly managed, records can be mined as a rich source of information, providing data about processes, transactions and charities. Records management will work together with knowledge management as we consider the lifecycle of our

information, analysis and intelligence. It will help to ensure we are retaining records in a way that improves efficiency, removes obsolete and duplicated information, and increases accessibility. Our records help us demonstrate transparency around decision making, and our Records Management Plan ensures our compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011. Although good records management does not ensure or guarantee OSCR any form of knowledge management capability, the absence of good corporate standards in records management will make any form of knowledge management impossible.

## **People strategy**

Our People Strategy recognises the importance of OSCR's people as our key resource and defines OSCR's ambition for its workforce – the right people with the right skills, highly motivated, high-performing and business-efficient. We want to build a more agile organisation, where our people and resources can adapt and respond to changing needs and priorities. We will actively work to ensure that staff are empowered and encouraged to be creative, using their knowledge and expertise to improve and enhance what we do for and with our stakeholders. Knowledge management will help encourage and facilitate ongoing learning and development.

## **Quality Assurance**

Knowledge management intersects with OSCR's Quality Assurance and by using the three aspects of People and Culture, Process, Data and Tools we will integrate and share knowledge to support development of both across the organisation. By working together to ensure that staff are able to identify and access the learning and training they need; and are encouraged to be creative using their knowledge and expertise to improve how we work and what we do.

## **Risk**

Our ongoing identification and prioritisation of corporate and strategic risks is informed by our use of information, intelligence and analysis. Knowledge management will help improve our understanding of risk, and the effectiveness of our risk management and mitigation. By contributing to our corporate needs, knowledge management will support a clear line of sight from our Corporate and Business Plans to our operational work, providing assurance and helping to communicate risk effectively.

# Creating a knowledge sharing culture

## Creating a knowledge sharing culture

Our vision for knowledge management is straightforward. We want all OSCR staff - including the Board - to have the information they need to do their jobs effectively so we can contribute to better outcomes for OSCR.

This is a collective challenge, but one that should help us all every day. By working together with the other key business areas we want to create a knowledge democracy for OSCR which enables our people to have access to the right information at the right time.

The Knowledge Management Strategy will work to ensure joined up thinking and approaches to the work with and across other business areas so that changes, innovations or development reduce any burden to staff.

The aims identified for this strategy are set out below under the three key component areas for OSCR:

- **People and Culture**
- **Processes**
- **Data and Tools**

These are supported by key findings and activities identified during the process of developing this strategy. As knowledge management is something that happens on an ongoing basis, the activities will evolve over time as the work develops and progress is made. Many needs and activities have already been identified in OSCR's Operational Plan and progress is being made towards delivery.

All of our people will play a vital role in developing and embedding knowledge management in OSCR. The Data and Research Team will work collaboratively across the organisation to introduce knowledge management, to help people understand what it is and why they need to be involved, and to help colleagues to identify priority actions for them to focus on.

### People and Culture

Our people are our main asset. We want to invest in our staff and board members throughout their time with OSCR to build a culture that values skills and knowledge and sharing those with each other. From induction to leaver interviews and valuing subject matter experts.

We want to develop confident and capable staff that can find and use information to help make decisions based on good evidence, share their knowledge, identify and make improvements. This will help build our capacity for improved outcomes.

### Aims

- Build and share collective corporate knowledge
- Invest in skills and training so we have the knowledge we need to do our jobs

- Recognise and respect for the expertise we each bring to our roles
- Developing a culture which supports joint working and collaboration to share knowledge.
- Creating capacity and mechanisms to enable two-way communication for listening and feedback
- Build trust and understanding at all levels of the organisation so our people feel safe to speak openly and share knowledge

## Processes

Our procedures and policies provide the framework to explain how we do our work and make decisions. They provide us with a fair, consistent and proportionate approach to regulating charities.

Policies and procedures help us capture and utilise knowledge. By working in collaboration with Quality Assurance to support the review and development of processes and procedures, knowledge management aims to contribute to clear well documented processes which will help us use knowledge more effectively.

## Aims

- Identify and review policies, procedures and processes to ensure they are current and accessible
- Use inventories to identify what sources of knowledge we have and where they are
- Develop case examples to build confidence and consistency in approach
- Capture and document new knowledge and changes as our work develops
- Ensure processes and procedures are documented

## Data and Tools

Our technology and tools equip us to capture and use knowledge. We need to know how to use the tools and systems we have to exploit our knowledge effectively. Within OSCR we can use data to manage our work, identify risks and monitor performance.

OSCR holds rich and comprehensive data on Scottish charities. We want to make best use of the data we gather in the course of our day to day business to generate insights and intelligence that promotes a better understanding of the Scottish charity sector and helps inform our regulatory activities. We want to use it to add value and create knowledge.

We also want to ensure others can access our data and analysis for their own research and to help them contribute to knowledge and understanding of Scottish charities, the Scottish charity sector and to support improvement. Similarly we want to be better at acquiring knowledge from external sources.

## **Aims**

- Work very closely on the cross-over between knowledge management and records management
- Collect the right data to inform decisions and improve the way we operate and deliver services
- Review metadata and the role it plays in supporting our work
- Make our data more useful
- Facilitate easy storing and sharing of knowledge
- Analyse and revise flows of work to modernise and simplify
- Gather, use and share data to add value by generating insights to develop our understanding of the charity sector in Scotland.



# Evaluating progress

## Evaluating progress

Embedding knowledge management within OSCR is just the start, it will become an ongoing process. As knowledge management reaches across all aspects of OSCR's activities evaluating the progress of embedding and implementing it will be multifaceted and ongoing.

Outcomes from OSCR's Business and Operational Plans may be applied as measures for some of the more tangible knowledge management work. However, the process of knowledge management contributes to our organisational strategic outcomes but is not an outcome in itself.

Evaluation will need to involve broad sweep and narrower in-team views and indicators to capture both measurable and more intangible effects and cultural changes. Over time there should be a mix of types and scales of impact. Therefore flexibility and appropriateness of evaluation methods will be important though not necessarily extensive as some of these may more readily be captured by, for example, Quality Assurance, digital activities or records management outputs, including:

- using technology to provide smarter ways of working and sharing data, information and analysis successfully,
- iterative learning and feedback cycles to address current knowledge management needs and identify new needs
- assessing the extent to which our staff and board share knowledge openly, value organisational knowledge, work collaboratively, invest time in learning feel comfortable in their ability to adapt to changing situations.

Embedding knowledge management and developing a knowledge sharing culture will not happen quickly. A persistent approach to stewarding knowledge management across our work, regular review to ensure appropriateness and a committed leadership will guide us to positive long-term success.



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