This chapter considers the nature and benefits of an organization gaining charitable status. Charity, in the sense of doing good for one’s fellow man, is often linked with philanthropy, which is the desire to promote the welfare of others. However, the legal definition of ‘charity’ is one that is carefully controlled because of the advantages that organizations which are classed as charities at law enjoy. Nevertheless, it includes a variety of purposes, which affect of the everyday life of citizens. Many people in England and Wales have real, if unknowing, contact with the law of charitable trusts, whether they are putting a small donation into collection boxes or envelopes, putting something into a collection at church, signing a Gift Aid declaration on admission to National Trust properties, contributing regularly through payroll giving schemes, or responding to major disaster appeals.
15. The role and status of charities

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