Press release: Trustees of Ipswich Kurdish Islamic Cultural Centre breached their legal duties, regulator finds

The Charity Commission has today (23 March 2017) published a report of its statutory inquiry into the Ipswich Kurdish Islamic Cultural Centre (registered charity number 1149580) ('the charity'), concluding that there was misconduct and mismanagement in the charity's administration.

The report sets out multiple failings by the trustees and concludes that the charity's financial management was poor.

The inquiry, which began in November 2015, found that the trustees:

- made unauthorised salary payments to one trustee amounting to £1,360, even though the charity's governing document prohibits the employment of trustees
- provided a zero interest loan to 2 members of the local community totalling £20,000 which amounted to twice the size of the charity's 2015 income
- did not have a safeguarding policy in place despite the fact that the charity operates weekend classes for children

The report also criticises the trustees' approach to engaging with the Commission, saying that their conduct fell below that which the regulator and the public expect, including by initially failing to take prompt action to address concerns identified by the Commission before it opened the inquiry. Following the opening of the inquiry, and as reflected in the report, the Commission acknowledges improvements in the trustees' conduct.

As part of the inquiry, the Commission has made an order requiring the trustees to complete a number of actions to address the failings and regulatory concerns identified.

The report states that the regulator will take further regulatory action if the trustees fail to comply with the order within a stated timeframe.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

> Our inquiry into the Ipswich Kurdish Islamic Cultural Centre found serious problems and basic failures. As our core guidance, The essential trustee, explains, trustees must comply with their charity's governing document and the law and must manage their charity's resources responsibly. That hasn't always happened at this charity, putting it at risk of not being able to carry out its

charitable purposes. I now hope the trustees take the necessary steps we have set out in our Order to improve the charity's governance in the future.

The full report is available on GOV.UK.

Ends

PR 21/17

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our annual report.
2. Search for charities on our online register.

National Statistics: Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report – 2017

This report is intended to be the first reference point for a range of environmental indicators and will provide, where available, annual updates on the indicators contained within it. It is of both public and academic interest and provides a valuable resource across government in providing links to government strategies.

News story: HS2 Phase One community information events 2017

We invite you to attend one of our community engagement events about Phase One of the High Speed Two (HS2) project and what it means in your local area.

We hope you will take this opportunity to talk to the project team, view maps, and ask us questions, and learn more about the construction and design of the new railway.

Date	Venue	Time
Wednesday 22 November	The Link – Water Orton Community Venue, 4 New Road, Water Orton, B46 1QU	3pm to 5:30pm
Tuesday 28 November	Carrs Lane Church Conference Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham, B4 7SX	12pm to 2pm
Thursday 30 November	Stoke Mandeville Community Centre, Eskdale Road, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, HP22 5UJ	7:30pm to 9:30pm
Thursday 30 November	Whittington Village Hall, Langton Crescent, WS14 9LR	5pm to 7pm
Monday 4 December	Burton Green Village Hall, Hodgetts Lane, Burton Green, CV8 1PH	4pm to 6pm
Wednesday 6 December	Bengali Workers' Association, Surma Community Centre, 1 Robert Street/Hampstead Road, London, NW1 3JU	5pm to 7pm

Past events will be removed as new events are added.

On 23 February 2017 Royal Assent was granted for Phase One of HS2. Since then, a range of preparatory works have commenced, including archaeological surveys and the creation of new wildlife habitats. We continue to engage with communities affected by the construction of the railway. Find out more about how we're constructing HS2.

News story: UK families will soon see bills cut as date announced for the launch of Tax-Free Childcare

Millions of parents can pre-register from today for the government's new childcare offers, with the launch of a new Childcare Choices government website.

The introduction of the government's Tax-Free Childcare scheme will begin on 28 April, for parents of the youngest children. It will be gradually rolled out over 2017 – cutting childcare costs for working families across the UK by up to £2,000 per child per year, or £4,000 for disabled children.

On top of this, from September this year parents of three and four year old children living in England will be able to apply for a new 30 hours free childcare offer, worth around £5,000 per child.

The Childcare Choices website includes a Childcare Calculator for parents to compare all the government's childcare offers and check what works best for their families.

Through the site parents can also pre-register for email alerts that will notify them when they can apply, as well as providing details of existing government childcare offers.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury, David Gauke, said:

> This Government is on the side of working families and our childcare support will cut thousands of pounds off bills for millions of households, as well as supporting parents to return to or remain in work.
>
> The new Childcare Choices website provides busy families with options that suit their needs, so they can clearly see which childcare offer works best for them. For the first time, we have brought all the childcare options together to make the process easier and simpler for families and childcare providers.

Education Secretary, Justine Greening, said:

> Affordable childcare and early years education are a vital part of how we can get our children on the right path, whilst also helping parents to be back at work, if that is what they want. Many parents are struggling to balance the cost of childcare against the benefits of being in work and this government wants to help.
>
> From today, parents can use the Childcare Choices website to find out what support is available for their family. Whether that’s our 30 hour free childcare offer, Tax-Free Childcare or Universal Credit, the website is a quick and easy way for parents to choose the offer that’s best for them and their children.

Two million working families will be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare. It will be gradually rolled out, with parents of children under two invited to enter the scheme first. By the end of the year, all eligible parents will be able to receive government top-ups of £2 for every £8 that a parent pays into their Tax-Free Childcare account. This will be open to all working parents across the UK with children under 12, or under 17 if disabled.

The new 30 hours free childcare offer for working parents of three and four year olds in England doubles the current 15 hours of free childcare currently available, saving eligible working families up to £5,000 a year.

Parents will be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare and the 30 hours offer in one go through the government’s new digital childcare service. Eligible parents can benefit from both Tax-free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare at the same time.

Both of these new offers have been run as trials over recent months, to test the new digital services.

More than 4,000 parents are already benefiting from the 30 hours offer in eight ‘early implementer’ councils, with thousands more set to follow suit, as four new areas launch the 30 hours offer in April. And over 2,000 parents are cutting their childcare costs with the Tax-Free Childcare trial.

These offers build on the childcare support already available to thousands of families, including:

- 15 hours free childcare for all three and four year olds
- 15 hours for disadvantaged two year olds
- enhanced childcare support through Universal Credit
- childcare vouchers.

How Tax-Free Childcare works

Working parents will be able to apply, through the childcare service, to open an online childcare account. For every £8 that families or friends pay in, the Government will make a top-up payment of an additional £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for disabled children). This top up is added instantly and parents can then send electronic payments directly to their childcare providers.

All registered childcare providers – whether nannies, nurseries or after school clubs – can sign up online now to receive parents’ payments through Tax-Free Childcare. Once childcare providers have signed up they will appear on the Childcare Provider Checker. This allows parents to check whether childcare providers have already signed up for Tax-Free Childcare.

How 30 hours free childcare works

Eligible parents will be able to apply online through the childcare service. They will receive a code – this will allow parents to arrange their childcare place ahead of September 2017. Parents can take their code to their provider or council, along with their National Insurance Number and child’s date of birth. Their provider or council will check the code is authentic and allocate them a free childcare place.

News story: Almost half of UK financial services staff now covered by ground breaking Women in Finance Charter

33,000 extra staff in the UK now covered by the plan to tackle gender inequality in financial services.

The news comes on the first anniversary of the charter, with 122 firms, employing over half a million people in the UK and covering almost 50% of the financial services sector, now signed up.

The Women in Finance Charter, launched a year ago today, asks financial firms to commit to four industry actions to build the female talent pipeline for leadership positions. The Charter's innovative approach has been an unprecedented success with some of the UK's biggest and most well established firms signing up.

The latest signatories include retail banks such as CYBG, payment firms such as VocaLink, global banks such as the Royal Bank of Canada, insurers like Ageas UK, and other firms including Pinsent Masons LLP and NS&I, while Bank of America Merrill Lynch is the latest firm with headquarters in the US to sign up.

Since the Charter launched, 77 financial services firms have committed to have at least 30% women in senior roles by 2021 and 23 firms have committed to a 50/50 gender split in senior roles by 2021. New signatories will announce their targets in June.

The Commercial Secretary, Baroness Neville-Rolfe, said:

> I know how difficult it can be for a woman to get the recognition she deserves and achieve her potential. And in financial services particularly, women progress too slowly or they leave the sector completely.
>
> We have made a strong start – the first anniversary of the Women in Finance Charter sees 122 firms seizing the competitive advantage by tackling sex inequality head on.
>
> But this is just the beginning. The financial industry is famed for its ability to identify opportunities to improve productivity. The Women in Finance Charter is one of those opportunities. It offers the chance to increase diversity of thought and for the financial services sector to better reflect the society it serves. This is why I encourage firms across the UK to step up and sign the Charter.

Jayne-Anne Gadhia, CEO of Virgin Money and the government's Women in Finance Champion, said:

> I am delighted with the strong and ongoing momentum of the Women in Finance Charter. A truly diverse financial services sector will drive productivity and underpin the UK's position as a strong and competitive economy. There is still further to go and I urge more businesses to commit to the charter so that they can play their part in building an economy that works for everyone.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch is the latest firm with headquarters in the US to sign up, joining the likes of Morgan Stanley, BNY Mellon, BlackRock, Circle and Thomson Reuters. This proves that there are no barriers for international firms to show their commitment to gender parity by signing the Charter.

Alex Wilmot-Sitwell, President, EMEA at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, said:

> Bank of America Merrill Lynch has a long history of supporting women's leadership and economic empowerment, but there is clearly more to be done.
>
> Increasing the number of senior women and addressing gender balance is crucial for our long-term success. This means supporting and engaging women at all levels, to ensure a strong pipeline of talent.
>
> We are wholly supportive of the Women in Finance Charter and the positive impact it will have on our industry.

FinTechs have also responded to the government's call to action with nine signing up including Nutmeg, RateSetter, Starling, Monzo, Zerado, Azimo, and FINTECH Circle.

The Gadhia review looked at the issue of unequal gender representation in financial services and found that in UK financial services female representation was around 23% on boards, but only 14% on executive committees. It is estimated that equalising the role of men and women in the labour market could increase GDP by 10% by 2030.

On 29th June, HM Treasury, in partnership with GrowthBusiness.co.uk, What Investment magazine and Virgin Money, will launch the inaugural Women in Finance Awards at The Savoy in London.

These awards will celebrate the individuals and organisations who are leading change by driving the gender diversity agenda in financial services.