

Charity Commission disqualifies trustee for 'wholly inadequate' running of charitable fund for Syria

The Charity Commission has [disqualified a trustee](#), after he set up and collected charitable funds to help people in Syria, but made a series of failures amounting to misconduct and mismanagement in the administration of the fund.

The Commission opened a compliance case into the charitable fund, known as Team Syria, in April 2015 after identifying that its website invited donations to help people affected by the conflict in Syria. The Commission found there was only one trustee, who was also the founder of the charitable fund.

Although the trustee never registered Team Syria as a charity, the funds raised are legally charitable.

The trustee was subject to a criminal investigation in February 2016, of which he was acquitted in December 2016. As part of the criminal investigation the police seized £7,691.92 of charitable funds held by the trustee.

The Commission opened a statutory inquiry into the charitable fund in June 2017.

Soon after the opening of the inquiry the Commission directed the police not to part with the charitable funds seized from the trustee. The Commission has since distributed these funds to two registered charities operating in Syria.

The inquiry found the trustee:

- was responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charitable fund, for his failure to fulfill basic legal duties, including keeping accounting records or showing how charitable funds had been spent in the name of Team Syria
- had acted as a trustee of the charitable fund from 22 July 2013 to 14 October 2015 while disqualified from doing so
- provided information to the Commission about the activities of Team Syria, which was contradicted by evidence from the police
- solicited funds in the name of charities that were unaware of his attempts at fundraising for them (or did not consent to it) and he could not show how the funds had been used
- failed to fully co-operate with the inquiry. This is itself misconduct and/or mismanagement.

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

Our investigation into Team Syria uncovered a wholly inadequate attempt at collecting charitable funds by an individual.

The public has a right to expect those who collect money for a charitable cause, such as helping people in need in Syria, to take their responsibilities seriously. This trustee's reckless approach to running a charitable fund and handling funds donated by the public, badly let down both the charitable fund's intended beneficiaries, and the public.

I'm pleased that our intervention ensured that the charitable funds seized from the trustee went to registered charities.

The trustee was disqualified from acting as a trustee of a charity, or from holding any office or employment with senior management functions in a charity, for a period of 7 years from the 26 July 2019.

Ends