

Charity regulator issues Official Warning and Order against school where children were exposed to terrorist propaganda

A charity that operates an independent school in which children were exposed to Daesh propaganda has been issued with an Official Warning after an investigation found the trustees responsible for mismanagement and/or misconduct. Its trustees have also been issued with an Order directing them to take specific actions.

The Charity Commission, the regulator of charities in England and Wales, opened a statutory inquiry into the Lantern of Knowledge Educational Trust (1111331) after a former Islamic Studies teacher, Umar Ahmed Haque, was charged with disseminating terrorist material to children at a secondary school run by the charity. The Commission was also concerned about a decline in Lantern of Knowledge Secondary School's performance against the independent school standards.

During his criminal trial, Mr Haque acknowledged that he showed children in his class a video relating to Daesh. However, he pleaded not guilty to the charges, and the jury could not reach a verdict. In March 2018, Mr Haque was convicted of a number of other terrorism offences, unrelated to this charity, and sentenced to life in prison.

In a report on its inquiry into the charity, published today, the Commission finds that Mr Haque "grossly abused" the position of trust he held at the charity and exploited an opportunity to show children in the charity's care the video, which promoted the ideology and tactics of a proscribed terrorist organisation to children.

The report notes that the public rightly expect charities, particularly those working with children and young people, to be safe places, free from abuse or harm, and that, in light of Mr Haque's actions, this was not the case within this charity. The Commission concluded that there was therefore misconduct and/or mismanagement in the charity's administration.

The Commission's inquiry also examined the school's compliance with the independent school standards and is critical of the trustees for failing to address a decline in compliance with these standards. Since 2015, the school has gone from being 'outstanding' to the lowest grade possible of 'inadequate'.

The trustees are criticised for further failures, including to comply with the charity's own governing document and internal policies.

The report acknowledges improvements in the charity's governance and

safeguarding procedures since the Commission's intervention. The trustees have also made progress and acted to address weaknesses identified by independent reviews that they instigated.

To address the mismanagement and/or misconduct set out in the inquiry's report, the Commission issued the trustees with an Official Warning and has also directed the trustees, by order, to take specified actions. These include complying with the independent school standards, and undertaking a review of its governing document.

Tim Hopkins, Assistant Director for Investigations and Inquiries at the Commission, says:

Umar Haque's action at this charity was appalling. It is completely unacceptable for any charity to be associated with terrorism and we are concerned by the corrosive effect this might have on public confidence in this and other charities.

Charities should lead the way in taking public expectations seriously and be distinct from other types of organisations in their attitude and behaviour, their motivations and methods.

We expect the trustees of this charity to learn from the failings set out in our report, and to comply with the required actions to strengthen the charity's administration. We will closely monitor the trustees' compliance with these actions.

The full inquiry report is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The Commission is not responsible for regulating or assessing the educational provision of independent schools; that is the responsibility of Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate.
3. Mr Haque was also employed at another unconnected charity. A copy of the Commission's report into that charity, following a statutory inquiry, can be viewed [here](#).