

Charity regulator removes trustee from Rigpa Fellowship

A charity trustee has been removed from her role and banned from trusteeship, after failing to respond appropriately to serious abuse within Rigpa Fellowship ([registered charity number 279315](#)).

A [statutory inquiry](#) by the Charity Commission has found that Susan Burrows had knowledge of instances and allegations of improper acts and sexual and physical abuse against students at the charity, but failed to take appropriate action in response. Ms Burrows either failed to recognise or sought to downplay the seriousness of allegations, and is responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

Ms Burrows was therefore removed from her position by the inquiry and entered onto the list of removed trustees on 20 September 2019. She is also permanently disqualified from serving as a trustee or senior manager of any charity in England and Wales, under section 178 of the Charities Act.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations Team at the Charity Commission, said:

Serious failings in the leadership of this charity led to people it was supposed to help being harmed and let down. Trustees hold important positions of trust, and are rightly expected to take all appropriate steps to keep people safe. The appalling abuses and failings that occurred here run counter to everything people associate with charity.

It is right that we have been able to hold those responsible to account. I hope this will bring some comfort to those so badly affected by what went on at Rigpa Fellowship. The safety and wellbeing of beneficiaries and those that come into contact with a charity must always be a priority for its trustees and staff.

The Commission has been engaging with Rigpa Fellowship since August 2017 over serious concerns about adult safeguarding. Concerns escalated during this engagement, prompting the opening of the [statutory inquiry](#) in November 2018, and in April 2019 the inquiry [disqualified former trustee](#), Patrick Gaffney.

The inquiry continues. The Commission intends to publish a full report, setting out its findings and conclusions, in due course.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. Rigpa Fellowship is a national charity headquartered in London, with objects to advance the Buddhist religion.
2. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.