

Commission issues Official Warning to charity linked to clothing recycling banks

The Charity Commission has issued an [Official Warning](#) to the trustees of [Helping Our Future](#) for repeated failure to engage with the regulator in response to serious concerns about the charity.

Helping Our Future has charitable objects to support children in the UK, Pakistan and India. The charity is based in Wolverhampton.

The Commission opened a regulatory compliance case into the charity in December 2016 following concerns about the charity's use of clothing recycling banks.

Complaints included that companies connected to the charity had removed other charities' recycling banks and had failed to obtain the relevant permission from landowners before situating their own banks. The charity took no action in response.

When asked about these companies by the Commission, the trustees could not explain how they worked, how the amount due to the charity was calculated or what clothing had been collected.

The trustees also did not demonstrate any oversight or control over funds being raised in the charity's name through its clothing recycling banks.

Other concerns included:

- contact with the trustees was difficult; the correspondent changed frequently, it was unclear who was the CEO and meetings were cancelled or postponed at short notice
- when the Commission did meet with the trustees, they had little knowledge of their roles and responsibilities, or why certain activities had been undertaken by the charity
- the trustees were unaware of their financial responsibilities, filed late accounts for 2018 and 2019, and their bank account was closed with no new account opened
- the trustees attempted to amend their charitable objects without obtaining the relevant permission from the regulator, misrepresented these charity objects in places including on the charity's website and carried out activities that did not further those objects.

The Commission tried repeatedly to engage with the trustees and resolve its concerns, over several years.

However, as a result of successive failures by the trustees to address concerns and engage with the Commission, the regulator has taken the significant step of exercising its power under section 75A of the Charities Act 2011 to issue an Official Warning to the trustees, directing them to take specific actions.

Helen Earner, Director of Regulatory Services at the Charity Commission, said:

Good governance is not a bureaucratic detail – it underpins the delivery of a charity’s purposes to the high standards expected by the public. It’s the way in which trustees can ensure they are meeting their responsibilities to their charity and its beneficiaries.

The trustees of Helping Our Future did not demonstrate good governance or act even after significant concerns were raised with them. They have also been obstructive in response to our approaches. We expect the trustees to now act quickly to comply with the required actions and address our continued concerns.

Failure to comply with the actions set out in the [Official Warning](#) will lead to the regulator taking further action against the trustees.

The Commission has an ongoing regulatory case into Helping Our Future.

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Official Warning was issued to the trustees in place at the charity at the time. Note, trustees were removed, added and some re-appointed as trustees during the course of the charity’s interactions with the Commission.
2. The trustees issued with the Official Warning are Marcia Vargova, Saffron Amber Hill, Chris Williamson, Ella Simone Hall and David Usher.
3. 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.