

Inquiry leads to improved governance at community centre which trustees “did not recognise as being a charity”

A [statutory inquiry](#) into a Gloucester community centre has addressed failings in the running of the charity. The former trustees of All Nations Community Centre (ANCC, [registered charity 1111832](#)) did not recognise the centre as a charity despite it being registered and established as such.

The Charity Commission [investigated](#) ANCC after the charity failed to file required financial information for over 5 years. The Commission was concerned that the charity’s property could be at risk, after a former trustee said that they wanted to de-register as soon as possible. The inquiry took protective action to vest the property in the Official Custodian of Charities.

The regulator held a meeting with the former trustees and found that they were not aware of their legal duties as trustees, including to file accounts.

The charity had taken over the Jamaican Sports and Social Club and Community Centre building in 2007. The charity was registered with general charitable purposes around community development, however investigators found no transactions on bank statements that appeared charitable. The centre’s main activity was the running of a bar, which the law does not permit as charitable. A charity can generate income through a trading subsidiary that runs a bar, so the inquiry provided the trustees with advice and instruction around changing the structure of the charity to bring its governance arrangements in line with the law.

Two serious crimes that occurred in 2015 and 2017 near the charity’s premises after events held there also gave rise to concern over whether the former trustees were running the charity in a way that promoted public confidence or protected its reputation as such. Neither incident was reported in line with the Commission’s [guidance on reporting serious incidents](#), though the inquiry did find that the trustees worked closely with Gloucester constabulary to resolve issues.

Further information is set out in the [report](#), which also notes that the charity failed to hold an AGM for several years, breaching rules of governance which stated that an AGM should be held every 15 months.

The former trustees’ failings are considered misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity, though the inquiry acknowledges that some were a result of them not recognising ANCC as a charity. The charity has been issued and complied with formal regulatory advice under the Charities Act to address concerns, including around ensuring the financial viability of the charity.

The former trustees cooperated with the inquiry and submitted required outstanding accounting information to the Commission. In June 2018 an AGM was held, resulting in changes to the trustee board. The inquiry has since met with the new board to ensure they understand how to carry out their roles properly.

Following this, the inquiry was satisfied that the charity's property was no longer at risk, and the order vesting it in the Official Custodian of Charities was discharged. The charity has also now set up a separate trading subsidiary to run the bar.

The Commission will be monitoring the progress of the charity with a follow up visit.

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

This charity is clearly valued in the community and has an important role to bring people together, and so the issues we found were disappointing. Being a charity trustee is an important role, and this case highlights the problems that can develop if trustees do not understand their responsibilities or seek appropriate professional advice.

Our inquiry has been crucial in enabling the charity to establish proper governance arrangements and procedures for the benefit of the community it was set up to help. I am pleased that the trustees have made progress and demonstrated a willingness to address our concerns. I hope and expect that this will continue so that the charity is able to thrive in the future.

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

Ends.

Notes to editors:

1. A books and records review carried out by the inquiry in 2018 found no evidence that charitable funds had been misapplied or misappropriated.
2. The Charity Commission has the power to make an order under section 76 (3)(c) of the Charities' Act to vest charity property in the Official Custodian of Charities where there is a risk to charity property. More information is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
3. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To read more about our work, see the [About Us](#) page on GOV.UK.