

# [Press release: Charity Commission confirms statutory inquiry following convictions for “horrendous” terrorist abuse](#)

The Charity Commission has today confirmed that a statutory inquiry into the Essex Islamic Academy (also known as Ripple Road Mosque) (1131755) is underway, having started in October 2017. The announcement, which confirms the Commission has been in regulatory engagement with the charity since 2017, follows the conclusion of the criminal trial today of Umar Ahmed Haque, a former religious teacher at the charity.

The Commission did not previously make the opening of the inquiry or its prior regulatory engagement with the charity public to avoid prejudicing the police investigation and subsequent criminal trial.

At the start of the trial, Mr Haque pleaded guilty to disseminating terrorist material to children at the Essex Islamic Academy. Following a 6 week trial at the London Central Criminal Court, Mr Haque has today been convicted of further offences, including the preparation of terrorist acts also relating to the Essex Islamic Academy.

Now the criminal proceedings are over, the regulator will resume its investigation in full. Once the Commission has completed its investigatory enquiries, it will deal with any failings or evidence of misconduct or mismanagement by taking appropriate regulatory action.

As part of the inquiry into the Essex Islamic Academy, the Commission will consider how Mr Haque was able to attempt to radicalise children, and what the trustees and others at the charity knew about this. The regulator will examine the level of supervision, due diligence and oversight the charity had over Mr Haque, and its adherence to safeguarding policies and procedures.

The Commission has liaised closely with multiple agencies including the police, educational regulators and the local authority on this matter since information was shared with the regulator by the Metropolitan Police’s Counter Terrorism Command about Mr Haque in 2017.

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

The crimes that Mr Haque has been convicted of today are horrendous, and are likely to have a devastating effect on many of the young people exposed to this harm.

This is one of the worst cases we have seen with children, as young as 11, being exposed to harm through attempted radicalisation and

terrorist material by this man. The welfare of these children is of utmost importance to all agencies involved. Mr Haque's abhorrent actions don't just affect these children, but their families and the community as a whole. It is important that those affected have the appropriate support made available to them, and the Commission will continue to do all it can to support the statutory agencies to ensure that this is the case.

The vast majority of mosques and supplementary schools including madrassahs do good work and are an important resource in local communities. What happened clearly damages the trust and confidence the children's parents had in the charity he was employed at, as well as wider public confidence. We and the public expect charities, particularly those working with children and young people, to be safe places, free from abuse or harm. This was not the case here, where Mr Haque grossly abused the trust placed in him because of his position and teaching role.

Today's conviction will reassure the public that such abuse is not tolerated, and that those responsible will be held accountable for their actions. We will continue to work closely with the police and other authorities to tackle the threat terrorism and extremism poses to charities, their beneficiaries and their work.

### **Essex Islamic Academy**

The Commission opened a statutory inquiry into the Essex Islamic Academy on 2 October 2017 to investigate serious regulatory concerns relating to Mr Haque's time at the charity and the charity's safeguarding practices. The inquiry is examining the administration, governance and management of the charity, including the management and supervision of staff with access to children or young people and the charity's adherence to its policies and procedures including its Child Protection Policies. The inquiry is also examining the charity's financial controls. The regulator's engagement with the Essex Islamic Academy prior to opening the inquiry included corresponding with the trustees and conducting a compliance visit to the charity's premises in September 2017.

In January 2018, as part of the inquiry, the Commission exercised its temporary and protective powers and issued an order under section 84A of the Charities Act 2011 to direct the trustees of the Essex Islamic Academy not to provide educational classes or any recreational activities which involved regulated activity with those under the age of 18. This restriction and order will apply until the trustees are able to demonstrate that they have complied with a number of urgent actions required by the regulator.

The trustees gave assurances that they had voluntarily stopped regulated activity at the charity. However, given the seriousness of what happened, the regulator exercised its powers and issue an order in any event especially in light of its role to act in the public interest and the need to protect the charity's beneficiaries.

## Further information

The Commission has also exercised its powers, under sections 47 and 52 of the Charities Act 2011, to compel the provision of information and records relating to Mr Haque, and the general governance of the charity more generally.

No complaints were previously raised with the Commission regarding Mr Haque or his roles or employment at any charity.

The Commission is not a prosecuting authority. The investigation of criminal offences is a matter for the police and/or other authorities.

The lead on protecting children at risk are Children's Services and law enforcement agencies. The Commission is encouraging anyone who may be affected by this case to contact Children's Services for further advice on 020 8227 3811 in Barking and Dagenham. Social services, supported by the police, are delivering a comprehensive and long-term safeguarding plan to protect and support them.

It is the Commission's intention, in accordance with its policy, to publish a report after it has concluded the inquiry, detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken and what the outcome was. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

If there has been misconduct or mismanagement in a charity or the charity's beneficiaries, staff, property or assets are at risk, the Commission will take robust action to both protect these and deal with the failings either of its own motion and/or in collaboration with other agencies.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's online charity search tool: [Essex Islamic Academy](#).

Ends

## Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
3. The Commission's role is as charity regulator to oversee charity trustees' compliance with charity law duties and responsibilities. Regulation of the standards of education in supplementary schools is not within the Commission's legal remit. In 2015, the Department for Education ran [a consultation on registration and inspection of out-of-school educational settings](#) providing intensive tuition, training or instruction to children outside of school.
4. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
5. Mr Haque was employed at the Essex Islamic Academy from 2014 to the date

of his arrest (May 2017).

6. The Commission issued the order under section 84A of the Charities Act 2011 on 19 January 2018.
7. Regulated activity is work which involves close and unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups including children. The full legal definition of regulated activity is set out in [Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#) as amended by the [Protection of Freedoms Act 2012](#).