

# [Press release: Charity Commission opens statutory inquiry into Oxfam and sets out steps to improve safeguarding in the charity sector](#)

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today, 12 February, opened a statutory inquiry into the charity Oxfam (registered charity number 202918). It comes after the Commission examined documents sent today by Oxfam regarding allegations of misconduct by staff involved in its humanitarian response in Haiti. The Commission has concerns that Oxfam may not have fully and frankly disclosed material details about the allegations at the time in 2011, its handling of the incidents since, and the impact that these have both had on public trust and confidence.

Further details about the scope of the inquiry will be made public in the coming days. The opening of the inquiry is in line with the regulator's duty to promote public trust and confidence in charities. The Commission will ensure the inquiry's findings are put on the public record and will also ensure the [actions the Commission required of Oxfam in 2017](#) on its safeguarding culture and practices are properly and fully carried out.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on [GOV.UK](#).

**David Holdsworth, Deputy Chief Executive of the Charity Commission said:**

Charities and dedicated, hard-working aid workers undertake vital, lifesaving work in some of the most difficult circumstances across the world. However, the issues revealed in recent days are shocking and unacceptable. It is important that we take this urgent step to ensure that these matters can be dealt with fully and robustly.

## **Future steps**

The Commission's Chief Executive, Helen Stephenson met today with the Secretary of State for International Development. They both agreed that charities need to do more to ensure high standards of safeguarding and set the right culture and tone at the top and are committed to ensuring that this is the case. We are pleased to announce, with DFID, that we will be calling in key international aid charities to a summit on safeguarding as soon as possible in the coming weeks, paving the way for a significant conference.

It is vital that trustees set a culture within their charity that prioritises safeguarding so that it is safe for those affected to come forward and report incidents and concerns with the assurance they will be handled sensitively and properly by charities. Full and frank disclosure to the regulator and the relevant authorities, nationally and internationally, is also key. Everybody has the right to be safe, and the public rightly expects charities to be safe and trusted places for all who they come into contact with.

The summit and conference follow on from the [alert the Commission issued to charities](#) in December 2017. This alert made clear that any previously unreported serious incidents should be submitted to the Commission as a matter of urgency. It also reminded charities to review their safeguarding practices and procedures if they had not done so in the last 12 months. The Commission will ensure that charities respond to this alert appropriately.

Ends

## Notes to editors

1. For the Commission's response to concerns about Oxfam on 10 February see [GOV.UK](#).
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.
3. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).
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.