

Press release: Charity Commission opens statutory inquiry into The Save the Children Fund

The Charity Commission, the charity regulator for England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into The Save the Children Fund (registered number 213890) over concerns about the charity's handling, reporting and response to serious allegations of misconduct and harassment against senior staff members in 2012 and 2015.

The Commission was in regulatory engagement with The Save the Children Fund in 2015-16, after the charity reported a serious incident relating to allegations of misconduct and harassment against a senior staff member; the regulator also received an anonymous complaint about the charity's response to further allegations against senior staff members. At that time, the Commission met with the Chair and instructed the charity to provide it with the findings of its independent review. It received direct assurance from trustees that all of these recommendations had been accepted and were being urgently acted upon.

The Commission re-engaged with the charity in February 2018 when they were responding to further public scrutiny about the 2015 issues. At this time, the charity announced a new review into workplace culture at the charity, which amongst other things will assess whether recommendations from a previous review have been fully and effectively implemented.

As a result of that more recent engagement with the charity, alongside new information from other sources that has recently come into the regulator's possession, the Commission is concerned about:

- whether the charity adequately reported the full extent and nature of allegations to the Commission in 2015/16
- how the charity handled various complaints in 2012 and 2015 and, as a result, the extent of any reviews conducted at the time by the trustees into the charity's response to the allegations
- the charity's decision making since February 2018 on its public position regarding these allegations

As a result, the Commission opened a statutory inquiry into the charity on 4 April 2018. The new investigation will examine, among other matters, whether trustees have:

- adequately discharged their duties in handling the allegations at the time, and in fulfilling their duty of care towards their employees
- ensured the charity has implemented measures about operating to appropriate standards of work place conduct and staff safeguarding – including testing staffing misconduct allegations, complaints or incidents received by the charity since 1 January 2016

- made decisions around public handling and reputation management on the historic allegations appropriately
- disclosed fully, frankly and accurately, serious incidents relating to staffing matters to the Commission

The inquiry is confined to the issues of safeguarding in the context of misconduct and harassment of the charity's staff; it is not examining safeguarding in the context of The Save the Children Fund's programme delivery for beneficiaries.

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

This inquiry centres specifically on how the charity handled complaints in 2012 and 2015 about senior members of staff, and how the charity responded to and managed public and media scrutiny of those events in 2018.

Opening a formal investigation does not necessarily mean that we have concluded that there has been wrongdoing by the trustees of The Save the Children Fund. However, we do have questions that must be answered, and we need to hold the charity formally accountable for providing them in a clear and timely manner.

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](#).

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 the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).
3. 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.
4. The Commission recently announced a [new suite of measures on safeguarding](#) including the establishment of a dedicated safeguarding task force.
5. The Commission will not seek to conduct work already commissioned by the charity in March 2018 in an [Independent Review of Workplace Culture](#). The terms of reference of the Workplace Culture Review is wider, focused on understanding the current workplace cultures and levels of trust in the organisation. The Workplace Culture Review is however, looking at the implementation of the 2015 recommendations – considering the effectiveness of the implementation and actions identified in the 2015 review. The inquiry will expect to engage directly with the Independent

Review of Workplace Culture on these aspects.