

[Press release: Charity Commission provides update on work of its interim safeguarding taskforce](#)

The Charity Commission has provided an update on the work of its safeguarding taskforce, established in February after the public spotlight on Oxfam and subsequent increased serious reporting.

The purpose of the interim taskforce is to help the Commission manage and respond to the increase in reports of serious safeguarding incidents by charities, and to undertake a review of historic serious incident and whistleblowing reports on safeguarding issues.

New reports of serious safeguarding incidents

- 532 new reports of serious incidents on safeguarding received in February and March 2018, compared to 1,210 throughout 2016-17
- 440 new cases opened relating to safeguarding concerns
- 219 incident reports from 33 charities funded by the Department for International Development, of these reports 127 are historic

The Commission has seen a marked increase in reports of serious safeguarding incidents from charities since February; these relate both to historic and more recent incidents. In February and March 2018, the Commission received 532 serious incident reports on safeguarding incidents, compared to 176 during the equivalent period in 2017.

The reports cover a wide spectrum, and some relate to risks of harm that a charity has identified, rather than to incidents of harm – for example internal audits showing that safeguarding procedures were not followed in certain situations.

The Commission has opened 440 cases relating to safeguarding concerns raised in serious incident reports from charities, or complaints and whistleblowing reports. These are being prioritised according to risk.

Among the new reports are those from 179 charities to which the Secretary of State for International Development wrote in February to seek reassurances that all appropriate incidents had been reported to the Commission. As at 9 April 2018, of the 179 charities Dfid issued the assurance request letter to, 33 charities had submitted incident reports. Of those 33 charities, 24 submitted reports which related to historic incidents. The 33 charities in total have now reported 219 incidents. Of these 219, 127 are historic incidents.

Review of historic reports of serious safeguarding incidents

- 5,501 reports received between 1 April 2014 and 20 February 2018 under

review

- over half of reports (3,300) have been reviewed so far

The taskforce has been undertaking a 'deep dive' of its records of serious incident reports on safeguarding matters to identify any gaps in full and frank disclosure by charities, and to establish whether appropriate follow-up actions were taken by charities, including whether incidents were reported to other primary regulators or agencies.

This requires the team to analyse a total of 5,501 reports of serious incidents reported to the Commission between 1 April 2014 and 20 February 2018. Over half of those reports (around 3,300) have now been re-analysed by the team; most of the incidents analysed to date relate to those reported in bulk by a small number of large charities.

Of these incidents, just over 2,000 involved allegations of potential criminal behaviour; the Commission's analysis has identified that only one of those incidents was not reported to the authorities at the time. The Commission has ensured that this incident has now been reported to the police.

Analysis so far has not identified any cases where the Commission has serious and urgent concerns that require it to take immediate action, or where it has had to engage with the authorities about any ongoing risk or criminality. The review of historic reports continues; once the work has concluded, the Commission will publish a report setting out the key findings and lessons for charities.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. The Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales.
2. We opened a statutory inquiry into Oxfam in February and has published the scope of the inquiry.
3. We have a vital, but specific, regulatory role on safeguarding. We are focused on the conduct of trustees and the steps they take to protect beneficiaries and others who come into contact with their charity.
4. Our remit requires us to work effectively with other UK specialist authorities. The Commission is not an inspectorate or agency, similar to CQC or Ofsted. We are not a criminal prosecuting authority, nor an arm of the police, which means we should not be expected to gather information for or report on charities' behalf to the police or other regulators or agencies.

5. Safeguarding has been a priority regulatory risk issue for the Commission since 2010. We have increased and intensified our regulatory interventions on safeguarding, including on a number of high profile cases, and our joint work with DFID.

6. Regardless of our specific remit and role, the number of incidents we are dealing with is increasing, and demand on our services in almost every area is growing. With fewer than 300 permanent staff, dealing with 100,000 contact requests a year, regulating 950,000 trustee roles and 168,000 registered charities, we are limited in the proactive engagement we can have with individual charities and trustees.