

Press release: Charity Commission review finds sufficient evidence of public benefit in Plymouth Brethren Gospel Hall Trusts

The Charity Commission has today published the findings from its programme of post-registration monitoring of Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC) Gospel Hall Trusts.

The Commission has not identified any significant regulatory issues relating to the charities' compliance with their governing documents, and has seen sufficient evidence of each charity's engagement with the wider community to demonstrate public benefit.

However, the report sets out a number of areas in which the Commission provided regulatory advice to trustees of the Gospel Hall Trusts, including on the charities' control of charitable collections made at meetings of Gospel Hall congregations.

The regulator committed to monitoring a sample of recently registered PBCC charities to ensure they were complying with their governing documents, including a Deed of Variation (DoV) adopted during the charities' registration with the Commission. Over 100 Gospel Hall Trusts have been registered since 2013; of that number 24 were selected for monitoring, including those about which the regulator was contacted with individual concerns.

As part of its work, the Commission spoke to a number of individuals who were concerned about the treatment of former members at Gospel Hall Trusts. The Commission accepts that trustees of Gospel Hall Trusts are not responsible for the behaviour of individual members, who have personal choice in their dealings with their own family members and others. However, the Commission's report makes clear that it expects the trustees to ensure the DoV is readily available to members and to have regular discussions with them about its provisions. It concludes that the trustees of these particular charities on the evidence it has seen have acted in accordance with the requirement for compassion set out in the DoV.

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

This is an important example of our proactive case work focused on recently registered charities. Our aim in monitoring new charities is to ensure they are operating in line with their governing document, and are following any regulatory advice and guidance, to help ensure that the public can support charities with confidence.

In this case, our review is able to provide public reassurance that the trustees of Gospel Hall Trusts are taking steps to embed the principles of the Deed of Variation in the running of their charities; we have provided regulatory guidance to some individual trusts and expect them to follow that advice consistently.

This review follows a report into the first PBCC charity to register, the [Preston Down Trust](#), and concludes the Commission's programme of post registration monitoring of PBCC charities. The regulator says that, as with any charity, it will carefully assess any concerns that may be raised in future.

The [full report is available](#).

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](#).