

Press release: Safeguarding is a key governance priority for all charities, regulator reminds trustees

The Charity Commission says safeguarding should be a priority for all charities, not just those working with groups traditionally considered at risk.

It comes as the charity regulator publishes a report showing safeguarding concerns are an increasing feature in its regulatory compliance case work with charities.

[Tackling abuse and mismanagement](#), the regulator's annual report of its compliance case work, reveals that safeguarding concerns featured in 302 regulatory compliance cases opened in 2016-17, up from 163 in the previous year. Disclosures with other agencies that have safeguarding responsibilities have increased by 30%, at 244 (up from 187 in 2015-16). Six statutory inquiries, the regulator's most serious type of engagement with charities, featured safeguarding concerns.

Over half of serious incidents reported by the charities to their regulator related to safeguarding concerns (1,203 of 2,182).

The Commission recently updated its [strategy on safeguarding in charities](#), which reminded trustees that they should proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of their charity's beneficiaries and take reasonable steps to ensure that their beneficiaries or others who come into contact with their charity do not, as a result, come to harm.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement, said:

We know that it is vital that trustees set a culture within their charity that prioritises safeguarding, so that the risk of safeguarding incidents is minimised, and 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. As our safeguarding strategy makes clear, everybody has the right to be safe, no matter who they are or what their circumstances are, and the public rightly expects charities to be safe and trusted places.

Our wider compliance case work shows that problems in charities often result from basic failures by trustees to understand and fulfil their legal duties. In the area of safeguarding, this can include failing to recognise that your beneficiaries may be at risk or vulnerable in certain situations, or not taking proper steps to

protect others who come into contact with your charity, such as staff members and volunteers.

I hope this report serves as a tool that enables trustees in managing their charities effectively.

Last month, the Commission [issued an alert to charities](#) reminding them of the importance of safeguarding, following a number of reports of serious incidents, and growing public interest in and concerns about accusations of harassment in the work place, including media reporting about some safeguarding incidents which have affected charities.

Tackling abuse and mismanagement also shows that in 2016-17 the Commission opened:

- 1,664 new regulatory compliance cases (2015-16: 1,804)
- 503 new monitoring cases (2015-16: 424)
- 187 new statutory inquiries* (2015-16: 53)
- 2,182 serious incidents (2015-16: 2,117)

*the increase in statutory inquiries relates in part to a class inquiry involving 74 connected charities which opened during the year; in addition, more charities became part of the double defaulters class inquiry.

The regulator also used its powers on 1,099 occasions; 13 of these were powers granted through the 2016 Charities Act. By the end of December 2017, the Commission had used these new powers on 80 occasions.

The Commission has today also published an updated [regulatory and risk framework](#); the updated document explains the Commission's approach to risk-led regulation and sets out how it prioritises both reactive and its proactive engagement with charities, including the development of policy and guidance aimed at enabling charity trustees to run their charity effectively.

The framework is designed as a guide for the Commission's staff and as a reference tool and guide for those involved in charities, notably trustees, staff and professional advisers.

Press office

Email

pressenquiries@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk

Press enquiries – office hours
0300 065 2123

Press enquiries – out of hours
07785 748787

Notes to editors

1. The Commission is not responsible for dealing with incidents of actual abuse and does not administer safeguarding legislation. It cannot prosecute or bring criminal proceedings, but it can and does refer any concerns we have to the police, local authorities, the Disclosure and Barring Service ('DBS'), and other agencies [each of which has a particular statutory function](#).