

# [Press release: Trustees disqualified following joint agency investigation and Commission inquiry](#)

Two former trustees have been disqualified following a joint agency investigation and a [Charity Commission inquiry](#) which found serious misconduct and mismanagement in the charities they were running.

Families for Survival and Save the Age Ltd were respectively set up to provide support to disabled people and orphaned children, and relieve the elderly of poverty, sickness and social inclusion. However the Commission's inquiry found limited evidence of charitable activity being carried out by either organisation.

The Commission had been monitoring Families for Survival since February 2014 after concerns were raised about the charity's fundraising practices. Further probes established that it was linked to Save the Age through shared founding trustees and a shared correspondence address.

The Commission supported investigations by the Metropolitan Police Service, Redbridge Council and the Department for Work and Pensions into suspected housing benefit and social security benefit fraud involving the charities. The founding trustees were both arrested in May 2015.

The Commission had further concerns about misuse of the charities, potential unauthorised trustee payments, lack of evidence of charitable expenditure, and dubious fundraising activities, so it opened [inquiries into both charities](#) and issued a protective order to freeze the bank account of Save the Age.

The joint agency investigation identified that a number of the names listed as trustees of the charities, apart from the two founding trustees, had been "hijacked" from individuals who did not have any connection with the charities. Prior to the opening of the inquiry one of the founding trustees had resigned and was working as an employee of Families for Survival.

In January 2016 the inquiry issued an order to suspend the sole remaining founding trustee of Families for Survival. Both founding trustees were convicted of charges brought against them by Redbridge Council in March 2016 which disqualifies them from serving as trustees of any charity.

Further investigations by the Commission found that the trustees were self-dealing by instructing their own accountancy firms to review the charities' accounts. The trustees benefitted financially from this arrangement, meaning there was serious unmanaged conflict of interest.

The inquiry also found up to £14,000 in unauthorised private benefit was paid to the trustees, and annual accounts were submitted containing false

information. Both sets of accounts were reviewed by the same accounting company. However one of the independent examiners signing off accounts was untraceable and the other was in fact an alias for one of the founding trustees.

Despite assertions that they were carrying out charitable activity at local nursing homes and campaigning in support of the elderly, scrutiny of accounts and a review of records held by Redbridge Council brought up no corroborating evidence. The trustees were therefore failing to further their charitable objects or operate for the public benefit.

The Commission concluded that there had been serious misconduct and mismanagement in the administration of both charities. As well as using the charities to facilitate unlawful activity, the individuals failed in their fundamental duties and responsibilities as charity trustees.

Following dissolution, the charities have now both been removed from the Register of Charities.

### **Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:**

This case highlights a cynical abuse of trusteeship by two individuals who used the good name of charity to further unlawful personal motives. They have proven themselves wholly unfit to serve as trustees.

Close cooperation between different agencies has been critical to the outcome of this case. Our intervention has upheld key principles of charity law and helped criminal proceedings in bringing these individuals to justice.

The full report of the inquiry is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Ends.

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Commission's remit was not to investigate or make any determination as to whether the trustees had committed a criminal offence under UK law. The joint agency investigation was dealing with this. The Commission's role where criminality involving a charity is identified is to support the criminal investigation and consider the implications for the way in which the charity is being run.
2. As the individuals' offences involved dishonesty, the trustees were automatically disqualified by law from being trustees of any charity under section 178 of the Act. From 1 August 2018 people who are disqualified from acting as a trustee will also be disqualified from holding certain senior manager positions in charities.
3. The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and

Wales. To find out more about our work see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.  
4. Search for charities on our [online register](#).