

[Press release: Trustees failed to report sex abuse allegation](#)

The Charity Commission has criticised the trustees of the [Grail Trust](#) (the charity) over the handling of an allegation of child abuse in the main organisation it raised funds to support, the Grail Trust India (GTI) as inadequate.

The allegation involved a person connected with the charity at a children's home in India run by its partner GTI, which has now closed. The charity raised funds for and provided financial support to GTI to run the home and representatives of the charity periodically visited the home.

The Commission carried out an initial investigation after being notified of the allegation in August 2011. This led to a statutory inquiry, which examined how the trustees dealt with the allegation and the charity's procedures and approach to safeguarding.

The Commission does not investigate allegations of abuse but intervenes to ensure that trustees are protecting their charity and its users. The allegation is still being investigated by the appropriate overseas authorities and although the inquiry had been awaiting the outcome of the criminal case, given the time that has passed, the Commission has decided to conclude its own investigation.

The inquiry found that the initial response by the trustees to the allegation was inadequate as they did not report the allegation and were not impartial in considering the allegation, which they publically rejected. The inquiry found this was both inappropriate and risked damaging the charity's reputation. The inquiry also found that the charity's trustees had failed to take reasonable steps to ensure that safeguarding measures undertaken by GTI were adequate.

The inquiry concluded that there had been serious governance failures in the charity and that the trustees were responsible for misconduct and mismanagement due to their mis-handling of the allegation of abuse; their failure to ensure that there were proper safeguarding systems in place at GTI and their failure to fully understand that their safeguarding obligations extended to visitors from the charity to GTI.

As a result the Commission issued the trustees with a formal action plan to ensure the trustees understood their safeguarding responsibilities and put adequate measures in place to manage the risks to the charity's beneficiaries. The Commission is currently monitoring compliance with this action plan, and is satisfied that the trustees are acting on the regulatory advice given.

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

This is very concerning. It is another case where trustees do not take abuse allegations seriously nor ensure there are proper safeguarding protections in place to protect children.

Trustees have a duty to act in the best interests of the charity and this includes having adequate safeguarding policies in place and fully implementing them.

Many charities deliver charitable work through other charities and partners both here in the UK and overseas. Where that work and those organisations are involved with children, it's important that the charity ensures the partner is not just capable of delivering that work, but has proper safeguarding measures in place. Trustees should therefore put in place proper monitoring of staff and volunteers and ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are in place at a local level.

Further information for trustees on safeguarding can be found in the Commission's policy on: [Safeguarding children and young people](#).

The [full report](#) is available on GOV.UK.

Ends

PR 23/17

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](#).