

Press release: Commission announces Class Inquiry into two connected charities

The Charity Commission has today announced a class statutory inquiry into Idaara Maarif-E-Islam ([506755](#)) and The Voice of Truth ([1094754](#)).

Idaara Maarif-E-Islam's objects include the advancement, preservation and welfare of Islam. The Voice of Truth, which is no longer in operation, had objects to promote the benefit of the community in Birmingham and the West Midlands in particular, but not exclusively, the Shia Muslim faith.

The Commission has concerns about financial irregularities linked to Gift Aid claims involving both charities. Further concerns include inconsistencies between the income and expenditure reported in The Voice of Truth accounts for the year ending 31 March 2016, and the charity's bank records for the same time period.

The Commission's records show significant connections between the two charities, as substantial payments have been transferred between them, and that at least one trustee of Idaara Maarif-E-Islam has also served as a trustee of The Voice of Truth. The inquiry will therefore seek to establish if this close relationship has been in the best interest of the charities and if any resulting conflicts of interest have been adequately managed by the trustees.

The Commission is also concerned about payments made by The Voice of Truth to individuals and a company who may be connected to the charity, and will seek to establish if these payments have been made in the best interests of the charity and if any conflicts of interests have been adequately managed by the trustees.

As a result of its concerns, the Commission opened a class statutory inquiry on 26 October 2017. The inquiry is examining:

- The administration, governance and management of the charities with specific regard to the extent to which trustees have:
 - Responsibly managed the charities' resources and financial affairs, in particular the adequacy of the charities' financial controls.
 - Managed any conflicts of interest or loyalty arising between Idaara Maarif-E-Islam and The Voice of Truth and individuals connected to both charities, and ensured that any transactions between the two charities have served the charities' best interest.
 - Adequately managed risks to the charities, their property and reputation.
 - Maintained an accurate record of the identity of the trustees on

the register of charities.

- The extent to which any weaknesses in the management and administration of the charities identified by the inquiry were a result of misconduct and/or mismanagement by the trustees.

With specific regard to trustees of The Voice of Truth, the inquiry will also examine the extent to which they have:

- Ensured that the submission of accounting and returns information comply with statutory requirements.
- Prudently managed Gift Aid claims.
- Adequately processed sensitive data such as the personal details of individuals collected directly by Idaara Maarif-E-Islam or received from third parties pursuant to the relevant legislation at the time.
- Properly authorised and monitored payments to connected persons and/or companies.

And, with regards to the trustees of Idaara Maarif-E-Islam, the extent to which they have:

- Adequately protected sensitive data such as personal details of donors pursuant to the relevant legislation at the time.

In January 2018, The Voice of Truth was removed from the register of charities after the inquiry found that it had ceased to operate.

The Commission's investigation continues. The inquiry intends to publish a report setting out its findings and conclusions on conclusion of the inquiry. Reports of previous inquiries are available on GOV.UK.

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 the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).
3. Under section 34 of the Charities Act 2011, the Commission has a duty to remove charities from the register that no longer exist or cease to operate.
4. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
5. The opening of an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrongdoing.

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Charity regulator investigates Idaara Maarif-E-Islam and The Voice of Truth

Press release: We're urging ex-forces personnel to join our ranks

We've been given a prestigious award by the Ministry of Defence for our continued commitment to inspiring and supporting both veterans and reservists. The award is given to employers who support defence and inspire others to do the same.

It was presented to company representatives Royal Naval Reservist Lieutenant Commander Robert Jaffier, now an asset and resource manager, and Ron Calderwood-Duncan, Head of Engagement and Culture Change.

Robert, who nominated the company, said:

I am delighted that the hard work carried out by Highways England to recognise the achievements and skills of ex-military personnel has been recognised.

In practical terms, Highways England appeared a good fit for me to be able to continue my civilian career while pursuing my personal development as a reservist.

The main challenge was settling back down to civilian life from my time out on operations and become reacquainted with the culture of the business that had evolved while I was away. So, it's great that my workplace offers successful applicants a buddy who is someone

who has experienced making the transition from military life to working for Highways England. I am delighted to offer my support as a buddy for new recruits, and I urge anyone from the forces looking for a career change to consider Highways England.

The Ministry of Defence makes awards under its Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. Employers have to show their values are aligned with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Since signing the Armed Forces Covenant in June 2017, we've actively been supporting leavers from the Armed Forces reintegrate into civilian careers, and to help operate, maintain and improve motorways and major A roads in England.

We launched an ex-military recruitment programme earlier this year which incorporated an insight day for service leavers to find out more about how it works, and the roles it can offer. It employs and supports both reservists and veterans, with up to 10 days paid special leave for reservists to attend military-related training.

There are many career routes available, from working on major projects or support functions such as HR finance and IT through to hands-on operational roles running the everyday traffic operations.

You can search and apply for jobs at Highways England via our [careers webpage](#).

You can also read the [Armed Forces Covenant promise in full](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: We're urging ex-forces personnel to join our ranks](#)

We're calling on ex-military personnel to consider a career in roads – after being rewarded for our work supporting people coming out of the armed forces.

[Press release: Criminal exploitation and 'county lines': learn from past mistakes, report finds](#)

Summary:

- lessons must be learned from past sexual exploitation cases
- all children, not just the most vulnerable, are at risk of criminal exploitation
- agencies should not underestimate the risk of criminal exploitation in their areas
- children should be seen as victims, not perpetrators
- awareness-raising is crucial in preventing criminal exploitation

Local agencies must learn lessons from past sexual exploitation cases if they are to effectively respond to 'county lines' drug running and other forms of child criminal exploitation, [a new report finds](#).

The thematic report, from inspectorates Ofsted, HMI Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and HMI Probation, also calls on agencies not to underestimate the risk of child criminal exploitation in their areas.

[Read 'Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery'](#) – this is an addendum to the 2016 report 'Time to listen'.

The in-depth inspections scrutinised practice in children's social care, education, health services, the police, youth offending services and probation services across 3 local authority areas.

Today's report illustrates the nationwide scale of criminal exploitation, with all areas – urban, rural, affluent as well as deprived – affected. Child victims come from a wide range of backgrounds. And while the most vulnerable are obvious targets for gangs, there are examples of private school children being groomed too.

Much has been done by many local partnerships across the country to deal with child sexual exploitation in their areas, the report recognises. But this success must be built upon and shared so that other forms of exploitation, like county lines drug running, can be dealt with effectively.

Inspectors found that some partners do not have a grip on the scale of criminal exploitation in their area. Poor intelligence-sharing sometimes hampers wider recognition and understanding of criminal exploitation, and, in

turn, the ability to effectively respond to children. This includes missing the risks to some children, or identifying them too late.

The report calls on all agencies to get the basics right. Making sure that there are clear systems in place at the 'front door' of services that first come into contact with children is essential, so that children at risk are identified and receive a prompt and appropriate response.

Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, will also raise her concerns about the scale of criminal exploitation at the [National Children and Adults Services conference](#) in Manchester today.

Ms Spielman is expected to say:

Local partners must be quick to learn and quick to act. But not all agencies fully understand the scale of the problem in their area. And regional and national networks of exploitation of children are even less well understood.

It is also a concern that some agencies are still not looking past the behaviour of grooming victims to the root cause. If we have learnt anything from past exploitation cases, it should be to 'see the child, not the problem'.

The inspectorates call for a 'culture shift', so that front line staff both recognise the signs of criminal exploitation, and see children as victims despite their apparent offending behaviour.

Better training for all agencies, but especially the police, is vital, the report argues. In the areas inspected, police had made some progress in recognising the context of criminal exploitation when dealing with children in possession of drugs. However, all police forces admitted that it was still possible that children could be prosecuted, despite clear evidence that they were being exploited.

The report calls for a whole system approach to address the perpetrators, to protect and support victims, as well as preventing exploitation by raising awareness in the community and disrupting criminal activity. In one of the areas visited, inspectors saw examples of innovative work to disrupt criminal exploitation from some agencies.

Agencies and professionals must work together with parents and children to alert them to the signs of grooming, exploitation and county lines. The report shows that children are often being groomed or tricked into working before they recognise the dangers, and often before parents or professionals realise what is happening. Inspectors saw clear efforts to raise awareness in the local community in the areas visited.

Schools and colleges are also essential partners in the whole-system approach. Some schools are working hard to understand, reduce and prevent the risks of county lines. However, this awareness needs to be developed and

supported across the country.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care said:

Tackling child criminal exploitation, including county lines, is a big challenge for agencies and professionals nationally and locally. It can be done, but agencies must make sure that they have the building blocks in place to work quickly and effectively.

Children who are being exploited cannot wait for agencies that are lagging behind or failing to recognise this issue. In responding to this dangerous situation, we must not repeat the mistakes of the past, where some partners were too slow to recognise the risk of child sexual exploitation in their areas, or somehow felt that it 'doesn't happen here'.

Wendy Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, said:

Criminally exploited children can only get the help they need when they've been recognised as a victim. We've found that when frontline officers handle cases involving children suspected of a criminal offence, they can be too quick to accept what they see at face value. Instead of seeing a vulnerable child in desperate need, they can see a criminal in the making. When officers ask the right questions – is this child being exploited? Are they at risk? – they can take the right steps to keep children safe and bring the real perpetrators to justice.

Professor Ursula Gallagher, Deputy Chief Inspector at the Care Quality Commission and lead for children's health and safeguarding, said:

Healthcare professionals and anyone working with children have a responsibility to look for the signs of exploitation, to use their curiosity and compassion, and not judge a child for their behaviour or the situation they are in.

This is why we work with other regulators to test how well individual parts of a system are working together to protect children and young people and to make clear what we expect of a high-performing area.

But it doesn't stop there. Services and systems as a whole need to consider how they share what they know with people working beyond their own locality, because people exploiting children do not limit their activity by geographical boundaries, and important safeguarding information must be able to follow children in order to protect them.

Dame Glenys Stacey, HM Chief Inspector of Probation, said:

We welcome this important report. The inspection shows that children of all backgrounds can be forced into criminal and sexual exploitation. What is also clear is that agencies and professionals need to do more to recognise the extent of the problem and intervene early. Youth offending teams are well placed to spot the signs of exploitation and we were pleased to see some good work recognised in this report. However it is clear that more needs to be done to make sure that all agencies are working together to protect children.

The inspectorates' findings are published today [14 November 2018] as an [addendum to the 2016 report: 'Time to listen – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and missing children'](#).