

Regulator concludes regulatory case involving Alzheimer's Society

Press release

Charity Commission reports on outcomes of its regulatory case involving the dementia charity



The Charity Commission has concluded its regulatory compliance case into the [Alzheimer's Society](#), finding that the trustees acted in line with their legal duties.

The case was opened in February after the national media reported allegations about the handling of bullying and harassment within the charity, including the use of confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements.

After reviewing detailed records and information, the regulator found no evidence that confidentiality clauses used by the charity were designed to or would have had the effect of preventing staff from reporting any whistleblowing, bullying, harassment or discrimination complaint. Allegations reported in the national media around the amount of money paid out in settlements were not substantiated by the evidence the Commission saw.

The Commission is satisfied that there were processes in place to ensure that settlement payments were properly scrutinised. The regulator has reviewed the Society's updated policy on settlement agreements, instigated following the allegations. It notes that the policy includes new explicit provisions stating that settlement agreements and confidentiality clauses cannot be used to hide improper behaviour or prevent lawful disclosures.

The Commission also welcomes the launch of a review of the Society's procedures for staff raising concerns to ensure these meet best practice. It has advised the Society that in making payments, thought should be given to how the decision might affect public trust and confidence in the charity.

In the interests of accountability and transparency, the regulator has also advised the charity to explain its decision-making and use of compensation

payments in its annual report.

The charity provided evidence that work continues to strengthen its internal culture to ensure a positive environment for staff.

The regulator is satisfied that the trustees cooperated with its enquiries and took its guidance on board.

Tracy Howarth, Assistant Director of Casework at the Charity Commission said:

Our case did not find evidence of wrongdoing at the Alzheimer's Society, or that its use of settlement agreements would stop people from whistleblowing. This is crucial – the Alzheimer's Society has an important role in ensuring the wellbeing of so many, and so it is important that its working culture allows staff to raise concerns. Like all charities, the Society must continue to ensure that staff settlements are only made where that supports the charity's purpose. Donors expect charities to be different from other organisations and to spend their money carefully. We also welcome steps being taken to further strengthen procedures at the Society and to strengthen the charity's internal culture.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. Any new evidence that might change our assessment would be of serious concern and would be examined closely.
2. Our case did not examine individual instances of bullying or harassment; our role is to look at a charity's governance, policies and processes, to assess whether trustees are complying with their duties in line with the charity law framework.
3. We received a complaint about the Alzheimer's Society in February 2018, detailing concerns about the charity's approach to dealing with staff grievances, including the extent to which the trustee board was aware of and overseeing decisions appropriately. We did not follow up on the complaint at the time, and have acknowledged that this did not meet the high standards we set ourselves.

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