

[Press release: Charity regulator makes robust use of new enforcement powers](#)

The Charity Commission has used new legal powers on over 130 occasions since they were introduced in the Charities Act 2016. The 2016 Act provided a range of new enforcement powers to the regulator, including the power to disqualify individuals from charity trusteeship, and to issue Official Warnings to a charity or an individual trustee.

[A report published today](#) shows that, in total, the Commission has used new powers on 137 occasions; this has included disqualifying 21 and suspending 7 individuals from trusteeship, and removing 12 individuals as a trustee during an inquiry.

The Commission has also issued 6 Official Warnings since the power became available to it in November 2016, and issued 14 notifications of its intention to issue an Official Warning. Among the charities that have been issued with an Official Warning is the [RSPCA](#), which received an OW in August 2018.

On 17 occasions, the Commission issued a direction requiring that charity property be applied in the interests the charity.

The information is included in the latest annual review of the Commission's compliance case work, Dealing with wrongdoing and harm 2017-18. The report covers the first full financial year during which the Commission has been able to use new legal powers introduced in the Charities Act 2016.

The regulator published a [new strategy](#) in October last year, which sets out a new purpose and five strategic priorities for the regulator, one of which is Dealing with wrongdoing and harm.

In her foreword to the report, the Commission's chief executive Helen Stephenson makes clear that responsibility for the reputation of charity is one the regulator shares with those whom it regulates and urges all trustees to recognise their role as the first line of defence against wrongdoing and harm, and the ambitions of the Commission to do more to support them.

Increased safeguarding case work

The report also reveals that safeguarding issues continue to feature highly in the Commission's compliance case work. The regulator opened 552 new safeguarding cases in 2017-18, compared to 302 in 2016-17 and 163 in the preceding year.

Overall, the regulator opened 2,269 regulatory compliance cases, up from 1,164 in 2016-17. 1,174 cases were opened during the first half of 2018-19.

In October 2018, as part of a [final report of its interim safeguarding](#)

[taskforce](#), the Commission reported having received a total of 2,114 reports of serious incidents from charities relating to safeguarding incidents or issues between 20 February and 30 September 2018, compared to 1,580 serious incident reports about safeguarding received in the whole of 2017-18, and 1,203 received in 2016-17.

In total, the Commission dealt with 2,819 reports of serious incidents by charities in 2017-18, up from 2181 during the previous year.

Work undertaken by the regulator has also helped address underreporting by auditors of matters of material significance. During 2017-18, the Commission handled 287 reports from auditors and independent examiners of charities, up from 54 the previous year. Most of these reports (82%) related to matters of material significance.

This resulted in part from work the Commission undertook with professional accountancy bodies, in the wake of a review of auditors' compliance with [new rules on reporting matters of material significance](#), which highlighted serious concerns about accountants' awareness and compliance.

Increased exchanges of information with other agencies

Exchanges between the Charity Commission and other agencies increased by 31% year-on year to 2017-18.

In 2017-18, the Commission made 3,579 data exchanges with other agencies, compared to 2,733 exchanges in 2016-17.

Exchanges on safeguarding issues more than doubled from 244 in 2016-17 to 596 last year. These exchanges represented 17% of all exchanges.

The Commission says these figures demonstrate a more proactive approach to exchanging intelligence with partners so as to effectively deal with wrongdoing and harm in charities and secure regulatory outcomes in the public interest.

Among the agencies with which the Commission exchanged information about charities are police bodies, other government departments, other statutory regulators and local government.

Helen Stephenson, CEO of the Charity Commission, says:

This report tells of the Commission's continued effectiveness in dealing with wrongdoing and harm in charities, including through the appropriate and confident use of the new powers we were granted.

Our new five year strategy sets out our purpose: to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society. We cannot achieve that goal by ourselves. The shared benefits of a thriving sector bring with them a shared responsibility to meet popular expectations of behaviour and

conduct. It is a responsibility which binds together the regulator and those whom we regulate. Trustees who together oversee more than £70 billion of annual income are the first line of defence in securing the reputation of their own charities and more widely that of the sector as a whole.

That is a huge responsibility and the Commission is here to help, not just to step in when things go wrong. So while we are dealing with more regulatory compliance cases and more reports of serious incidents than ever before as the number of charities on the register continues to grow, it is important to recognise the hard work and dedication of the overwhelming majority of trustees. Nevertheless, where things do go wrong, the potential impact of such cases on public trust and confidence when they do come to light also demonstrates how precious and fragile the good standing of charity can be.

That is why we are working on becoming more preventative in our approach, developing the risk-based element to its work so that it can spot potential problems before they occur.

Other key figures

- 138: new inquiries opened, representing a decrease year-on-year; the figure of 187 in 2016-17 included a class inquiry involving 74 connected charities.
- 415: new monitoring cases opened (2016-17: 503)
- 101: whistleblowing reports received (2016-17: 88)
- 1,135: uses of the Commission's compliance powers – old and new (2016-17: 1,099).
- £33.2m: total charitable funds directly protected by regulatory intervention (2016-17: £81m)

Ends

[News story: Revisions to music and dance GCSE, AS and A levels](#)



Performance rules for GCSEs, AS and A levels in music and dance are being revised, Ofqual confirmed today (Tuesday 29th January).

The revisions are being made to address issues we identified with the way our rules for the performance assessment in these qualifications operated in practice, after they were first delivered in summer 2018. We received 370 responses to our consultation on the revisions and, having analysed these, we have decided to:

- revise our requirements in GCSE, AS and A level dance and music to allow exam boards to determine how to mark a student's performance when that performance falls short of the minimum required length
- add a footnote to the conditions for GCSE and GCE music, to broaden the range of acceptable reference material beyond a traditional written score or lead sheet, where such a score is not available
- revise our requirements for how many dances students are required to perform in the GCSE dance performance assessment, in order to align with the Department for Education's subject content

In line with views expressed in the consultation, these changes will come into effect immediately, meaning our new expectations will apply to this summer's exams.

Our consultation ran for 4 weeks between 9 November and 9 December 2018. Our analysis of responses and reasons for our decisions are set out in the [consultation outcome](#).

Published 29 January 2019

[Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Colombia: September 2019](#)



Mr Colin Martin-Reynolds CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia.

Mr Colin Martin-Reynolds CMG has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia in succession to Dr Peter Tibber who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service. Mr Martin-Reynolds will take up his appointment during September 2019.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Colin Martin-Reynolds

Married to: Mr Sam Martin-Reynolds

Children: One son

2013 to 2018 FC0, Chief Information Officer

2011 to 2013 Brasilia, Deputy Head of Mission

2008 to 2010 FC0, Programme Director, Corporate Services Programme

2004 to 2008 Washington, First Secretary then Counsellor (Change Management) and Consul-General

2002 to 2004 FC0, Deputy Head, Human Resources Directorate

2001 to 2002 FC0, Team Leader, Southern Africa Section, Africa Directorate

1998 to 2001 FC0, Private Secretary to Minister of State

1997 to 1998 FC0, Political Section, United Nations Department

Further information

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[Press release: Boost for small](#)

business through new government investment in tech project trials

- 15 unique projects – including digital dairy farming, AI chatbots and cloud computing trials – will benefit from £2 million from the Business Basics Fund, part of the modern Industrial Strategy
- from this week small firms, academia and local authorities can now apply for a share of the next wave of funding to help them become even more profitable

Technology projects and pilots across the country – including digital dairy farming, artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots and cloud computing technology – are among those to benefit from a new fund to boost the productivity of UK small businesses, Small Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst confirmed today (29 January 2019).

A total of 15 projects from all parts of the UK have won a share of £2 million from the first round of funding from the Business Basics Fund. Among the winning bidders are cutting-edge collaborations between businesses and groups including the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD), Enterprise Nation, Universities, Cavendish Enterprise, government-backed Growth Hubs and local authorities.

Among the projects to receive funding for their innovations are:

- Cavendish Enterprise, a national business support provider, who will test an innovative management development programme for micro-enterprises
- London-based Enterprise Nation will test ways to encourage SMEs to adopt digital technologies such as cloud computing
- Greater London Authority, CognitionX, Capital Enterprise, and the London School of Economics will be working together boost adoption of AI technologies like chatbots for the retail and hospitality sector. Chatbots can help bridge the gap between online and offline experiences
- Locality, a London-based charity that supports local community organisations will pilot a scheme to increase the adoption of cloud-based accounting packages by community sector Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Devon County Council will complete a research project to help rural micro businesses adopt modern business practices
- Food Forward and the University of Surrey are developing an online tool for SMEs in the dairy sector to find proven technologies that can accelerate their production and boost productivity
- Cass Business School (City) in partnership with the University of Oxford, Bocconi University, London Growth Hub and Cavendish Enterprise will deliver a cutting-edge, completely free of charge, business support programme to hundreds of UK micro businesses focused on systematic decision making

- the Skills & Growth Company will pilot the delivery of 'Learning Journeys', in partnership with Siemens and RedEye, to help SMEs in Cheshire benefit from their expertise in using digital technology
- the Business Clinic at Northumbria University which is an education scheme whereby a group of business students participate in a 'consultancy firm' to provide free advice for clients

Small Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and as part of our modern Industrial Strategy, we are supporting them with new investments to boost their productivity and ensure they can continue to thrive in the future.

Today's investment will support innovative projects that test how government and private sector companies can help small businesses adopt a range of technologies and management practices that save them time and make them more efficient.

A second [funding competition](#) has launched with £2 million available to businesses, academia and local authorities for new projects focused on testing ways of rolling out existing productivity-boosting technology and management practices to businesses.

The Fund, which forms part of the government's plan to boost UK national productivity through its modern Industrial Strategy, is delivered in partnership with Innovate UK and Nesta.

Research from the CBI suggests that by encouraging more businesses to take advantage of existing technologies, management practices and business support— such as cloud computing, mobile technology and e-purchasing – the UK economy could receive a £100 billion boost and see a 5% reduction in income inequality.

Dr Ian Campbell, Executive Chair of Innovate UK, said:

Trying something new is a big step for any business, but true innovation enables firms grow. To solve the UK's productivity puzzle, we need more firms to adopt new, but proven, technologies and novel ways of doing things so they can get ahead of the competition.

That's exactly what the Industrial Strategy, through the business basics scheme, is helping these projects to achieve.

Geoff Mulgan, Chief Executive of innovation foundation Nesta, said:

The Business Basics Fund signals a welcome commitment by government

to applying experimental methods to boosting economic productivity.

It is vitally important that we gather evidence about the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the billions of pounds that are spent by governments around the world, currently with not enough hard evidence about what works.

The government has also published the [Business Support Evaluation Framework](#). The new Framework will set out the quality standards that are expected for evaluations of BEIS-funded business support programmes and will enable the effectiveness of different policies and programmes to be compared.

The framework is designed to assist policy makers, evaluators and delivery bodies in generating robust evidence of what works, so BEIS can make better informed decisions of current and future policies.

Government is committed to investing, through its modern Industrial Strategy, in science and research to keep the UK at the forefront of new technologies and the benefits they bring.

The Industrial Strategy is also helping us nurture and upskill people to do the jobs of the future, through increased investment in technical education and a national retraining scheme.

HeadsUp! Boosting performance amongst micro firms through take-up of digital technologies

Parties: Enterprise Nation, Brunel University London

Location: Lancashire, Birmingham, Oxfordshire and London

Background: A new project that will test how best to encourage SMEs to adopt digital technologies (ie cloud computing, E-commerce transactions, Customer Relationship Management and accounting software, Human Resources management systems).

Artificial Intelligence in London's hospitality and retail SME sector

Parties: The Greater London Authority, London School of Economics (Centre for Economic Performance), two small businesses (CognitionX and Capital Enterprise), the London Growth Hub

Location: London

Background: A pilot that will test the effectiveness of different mechanisms to encourage the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies such as chatbots in the retail and hospitality sectors.

People Skills+: An innovative management and leadership approach

to boosting SME productivity

Parties: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Ltd, The Behaviouralist (academia), Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

Location: Greater Birmingham and the Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area.

Background: Project focused on building skills and capabilities of owner/managers of hard to reach SMEs by investing in people management practices through the use of an online diagnostic tool and independent local advice.

A Scientific Approach to SME Productivity

Parties: City University London, University of Oxford (Said Business School), Cavendish Consortium, Bocconi University (ICRIOS) and the Greater London Authority/London Growth Hub

Location: Greater London and surrounding areas

Background: Building on trials carried out in Italy, this project will look to measure the effectiveness of applying a scientific approach to decision making to enable SMEs in England to make more effective strategic decisions.

Cavendish Micro-Business Productivity Boost Project

Parties: Cavendish Consortium Ltd, University of Warwick (Enterprise Research Centre) and OMB Research

Location: England-wide

Background: A project to establish if early stage micro businesses that are both willing and able to increase productivity can be identified, and which interventions are most effective in encouraging them to adopt productivity enhancing business practices at the early stages.

Local Productivity Club

Parties: Anglia Business Growth Consultants Limited, College of West Anglia and the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

Location: Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

Background: This project aims to demonstrate that forming a structured club of small low productivity companies all from the same local area together with support can deliver significant productivity gains within 4 months.

Testing data-led targeting of low and mid productivity firms to increase awareness of performance and support

Parties: West Yorkshire Combined Authority / Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership

Location: SMEs in the Leeds area.

Background: This project will look at how tailored, targeted messages can encourage businesses to address their low productivity (i.e. behavioural nudges) and how this knowledge impacts on subsequent behaviour.

Productivity in professional services, by inspiring employees to step forward

Parties: The Career Innovation Company Limited, Institute of Employment Studies

Location: South West

Background: This project will test the impact of an existing online programme aimed at individuals which will be adapted to be relevant to employees of SMEs in professional services.

Nudging SMEs towards greater productivity

Parties: Tier 2.0 Future Limited, Tax Optimiser Ltd

Location: Smaller cities in England

Background: Led by a social enterprise and working with a software development company (which is an SME), this project will test how different (predominately) online messaging affects what SMEs do.

Engaging Rural Micros for increased productivity

Parties: Devon County Council

Location: South West

Background: A project to test the theory that rural micro businesses need support at a basic level to adopt modern business practices

ADAPT

Parties: Skills and Growth Company

Location: North West

Background: This project will pilot a new way of encouraging up to 30 high growth potential SMEs in the Northwest in adopting two types of existing digital automation practices and Industrial Digitisation Technologies (IDT)

Parties: Locality, Howard Neal Ltd

Background: This charity will pilot a process of facilitated support e.g. peer support from early adopters to increase the adoption of cloud-based accounting packages by community sector SMEs.

Digitally Enabled Business Clinic – a cost-effective means of universities supporting SMEs to increase their productivity

Parties: Northumbria University

Location: Northumbria

Background: A project to explore the effectiveness of a Digitally Enabled Business Clinic (DEBC) to enable SMEs to access free advice from supervised university business school students, for example including digital marketing, finance, strategic advice through digital media and tools etc, removing the need for costly physical infrastructure.

Technology foresight for growth and productivity: the design and implementation of a new foresight approach for UK SMEs

Parties: Kingston University

Location: London area

Background: This research project will produce three main outputs. The first is a foresight methodology that is effective, scalable and easy to use by UK SMEs, especially those operating in clusters, for identifying and developing emerging technologies. The second is a list of critical technologies specifically aimed at improving the productivity of Digital Health SMEs. The third will be a list of key actions enabling these same firms to adopt these technologies and ultimately to enhance their productivity and growth.

Resource Productivity in the \$20 billion Dairy Manufacturing Sector

Parties: Food Forward, University of Surrey

Background: To develop and test an online diagnosis tool to enable SMEs in the dairy sector to easily evaluate the case for investment in proven technologies that improve resource productivity.

[Press release: Adults skills gap](#)

Adult training is often only available for workers who are already highly paid or highly skilled, a new report from the Social Mobility Commission reveals today (29 January 2018).

The [Adult Skills Gap report](#) shows that the poorest adults with the lowest qualifications are the least likely to access adult training – despite being the group who would benefit most. Men in routine and manual occupations are the least likely to learn new skills.

About 30% of those employed in managerial and professional occupations participated in training in the last 3 months compared to 18% in routine and manual jobs. This follows earlier research showing that half (49%) of adults from the lowest socio-economic group receive no training at all after leaving school.

In contrast, high-skilled workers tend to benefit from 'a virtuous circle' of frequent in-work training and pay increases, says the research carried out by the Institute for Employment Research, Warwick University. Professional or managerial workers are twice as likely to be sent on courses as other workers, while graduates are 3 times as likely to access training as those with no qualifications.

An individual's background also has an impact. Workers whose parents came from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to benefit from adult training – which can impact on social mobility. Employees from more privileged backgrounds are more likely than other low-skilled workers to take advantage of in-work learning to rise up the ranks.

Dame Martina Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

Too many employers are wasting the potential of their employees by not offering training or progression routes to their low and mid-skilled workers.

Both employers and the government need to act to address this problem. They should start by increasing their investment in training, to bring it closer to that of international competitors, and prioritise this to those with low or no skills. Doing this would benefit both business and the economy as a whole.

The commission has previously found that 1 in 4 of the UK's low-paid workers will never escape low pay – a problem due largely to low skill levels. Yet the UK lags behind other countries in giving adults a second chance to learn new skills and achieve their potential. The UK spends just two-thirds of the European average on adult training, and investment is in decline. Between 2010 to 2011, and 2015 to 2016 government funding for adult skills fell by 34% in real terms.

The problem is that employers fund 82% of all UK training and tend to prioritise senior, high-skilled employees. Most other training is paid for by individuals themselves – if they can afford it. Free courses run by government make up just 3% of all accessed training courses.

The result is a system with vast numbers of low-skilled workers with little opportunity to build skills and escape low pay. This urgently needs rebalancing – for productivity as much as social mobility, says the commission.

Alastair Da Costa, chair of Capital City College Group and a SMC Commissioner, said:

A lack of ongoing training for low-paid workers is a contributing factor for millions to a lifetime of poorly-paid work. As we prepare to leave the EU, it is more important than ever for us to build relevant skills to improve the UK's productivity. That is why we want to see more investment in life-long learning and adult education – including enabling more courses to be available for those who cannot afford them.

Dr Daria Luchinskaya, from the Institute for Employment Research, Warwick University, said:

This report shows a 'virtuous' and a 'vicious' cycle of learning, whereby those with low or no qualifications are much less likely to access education and training after leaving school than those with high qualifications.

Peter Cheese, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), said:

These findings should act as a wake-up call for employers to look a lot harder at how they are developing their workforce for the future. Building skills at all levels and roles is essential to improving productivity and performance, for engagement and retention of employees, and to highlight and support progression opportunities. However, many of these are longer term outcomes and too often the focus for training is on short term job needs.

Main findings include:

- the poorest adults with the lowest qualifications are the least likely to access adult training – despite being the group who would benefit most
- previous research has shown that half (49%) of adults from the lowest socio- economic group receive no training at all after leaving school, compared to 20% from the top group
- this study shows similar findings hold for employed adults participating in training in the last 3 months – 30% of those in professional and managerial jobs against 18% in routine and manual occupations
- graduates are 3 times more likely to receive training than those with no qualifications, while professionals and managers are about twice as likely to receive training as lower-skilled workers
- employers fund 82% of training – prioritising those in senior or professional roles – while most other training is paid for by individuals themselves
- overall investment in adult skills from employer, government and individuals was around £44 billion in 2013 to 2014 – government funds just 7% of this training
- government-funded training aims to support those without the means to

pay for their own training and does reach lower-skilled workers and those in deprived areas but 29% of this money still goes to adults in the most affluent 40% of areas

- the UK spends two-thirds of the EU average on adult training
- government funding for the Adult Skills Budget fell by £830 million (cash terms) between 2010 to 2011 and from £2.84 billion to £2.01 billion, equivalent to a 34% fall (real terms) between 2015 to 2016

The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the UK and to promote social mobility in England. It consists of 13 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

The commission board is chaired by Dame Martina Milburn and comprises:

- Alastair da Costa, Chair of Capital City College Group
- Farrah Storr, Editor-in-chief of Cosmopolitan
- Harvey Matthewson, Aviation Activity Officer at Aerobility and Volunteer
- Jessica Oghenegweke, Project co-ordinator at the Diana Award
- Jody Walker, Senior Vice President at TJX Europe (TK Maxx and Home Sense in the UK)
- Liz Williams, Group Director of Digital Society at BT
- Pippa Dunn, Founder of Broody, helping entrepreneurs and start ups
- Saeed Atcha, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Xplode magazine
- Sam Friedman, Associate Professor in Sociology at London School of Economics
- Sammy Wright, Vice Principal of Southmoor Academy, Sunderland
- Sandra Wallace, Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper
- Steven Cooper, Chief Executive Officer C.Hoare & Co

The functions of the commission include:

- monitoring progress on improving social mobility
- providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
- understaking social mobility advocacy