

Press release: Move to end bogus holiday sickness claims

- Practice costs travel industry millions and risks pushing up prices for law-abiding holidaymakers

Travel industry bosses and others are today being invited to submit evidence to help drive the government's crackdown on the holiday sickness claims culture.

The call for evidence being launched today (13 October 2017) will give Ministers a greater insight into the reported rise in suspected false insurance claims for gastric illnesses like food poisoning being brought by British holidaymakers.

It is the latest stage of the government's crackdown on a problem which is damaging Britain's reputation overseas and which could drive up holiday costs for hard-working families.

The upsurge in holiday sickness claims in this country – partly fuelled by touts operating in European resorts – could be as high as 500% since 2013, according to travel industry estimates. This is not seen in other European countries, and has raised questions over the scale of bogus claims.

The call for evidence will ask the industry and others to submit a wide range of information, from the volumes of claims to the amount of damages awarded. This will be used to help Ministers identify next steps to tackle false claims.

Justice Minister Dominic Raab said:

Bogus claims against tour operators risk driving up the price of summer holidays abroad for hard-working families who have earned a break. We're taking action to deter these claims, and protect holiday-makers from being ripped off.

The call for evidence, which will remain open for four weeks, follows government action over the summer aimed at reducing cash incentives to bring spurious claims against package holiday tour operators.

Tour operators often settle holiday sickness claims out of court, rather than challenge them because – due to the fact these spurious claims are arising abroad – legal costs are not controlled, so costs for tour operators can be out of all proportion to the damages claimed.

Ministers have put forward proposals which would mean tour operators would pay a prescribed sum depending on the value of the claim, making defence costs predictable and helping to deter bogus claims.

These proposals will be considered by the Civil Procedure Rule Committee, which is responsible for setting rules on legal costs. We aim to bring the new rules into force early next year.

Notes to editors

1. The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) reports a 500% increase from around 5,000 claims in 2013 to around 35,000 claims in 2016. This is despite the fact that travel industry data on the global trend for reported incidence of illness in resorts has actually declined in recent years.
2. ABTA has also found that while the average value of a gastric illness claim is about £2,100, the average cost of defending a claim is almost £3,800. The projected total cost of claims to the industry in 2016 (including damages paid) was estimated by ABTA to be over £240 million. We will look into these figures as part of the call for evidence.
3. For more information call the Ministry of Justice press office on 020 3545 8953.

Speech: “The absence of famine is not the absence of need. Hunger by any other name is still hunger”

Thank you Mr President and thank you Secretary-General for your briefing.

Eight months ago, Secretary-General, you issued an urgent wake up call to the world. The threat of famine, the threat of millions starving to death, loomed large over the people of Somalia, South Sudan, northeast Nigeria and Yemen. Today, thanks to your call to action and thanks to the global efforts that followed, famine has been kept at bay.

And yet, this is no cause for celebration. As you have set out in your briefing, the absence of famine is not the absence of need. Hunger by any other name is still hunger. And in each of those countries I just mentioned, the need remains colossal, overwhelming in fact, and even greater than it was in February.

In Somalia, over 3 million people are going to bed hungry. The same can be said for over 5 million people in northeastern Nigeria. In South Sudan, there are literally more people without food than there are with food; more than

half of the population – over 6 million people –are severely food insecure. And in Yemen, as we heard earlier this week, over 17 million people are now food insecure, nearly 7 million of whom are just one step away from famine.

And if only to deepen the tragedy further, in all four of these countries the impact falls most acutely on women, girls and children.

As this Council well knows, the long-term solution to all these crises is ending and preventing conflict. But long-term fixes alone are no good when hunger kills in the short term. We need aid to reach people in need quickly. And as a Council we need to find the political will necessary to overcome the barriers that too often prevent this from happening.

We need only look to South Sudan, where fighters from each side accuse civilians of feeding or being fed by the enemy. Access restrictions, bureaucratic impediments and attacks on humanitarian workers continue to delay the delivery of life-saving assistance, with over 1,600 access incidents reported since the start of 2016. That's the delivery of food being denied to those most in need at least twice a day for nearly two years.

In northeast Nigeria, it's a similar story, with aid agencies unable to access many of those in need due to continuing fighting between Boko Haram and government forces. As a priority, the Government of Nigeria must protect civilians and provide unimpeded humanitarian access.

In parallel, the government needs to set out clear steps for ending the conflict which aren't reliant on military measures alone. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through addressing the root causes of the violence.

In Yemen, the gravest humanitarian situation today, food is the biggest weapon, and lack of food the biggest killer. The Council has been very clear this week about the need for increased commercial and humanitarian access into and across Yemen, including through increased capacity at all Yemeni ports, particularly Hodeidah.

We also need to see public-sector salaries paid regularly across the country, starting with the health, water, sanitation and waste management sectors, to stem cholera and preserve essential government services.

It's only in Somalia, Mr President, that drought is partially responsible for the situation. Even then, the war remains the principal trigger and contributor to this unfolding humanitarian tragedy. Access restrictions are again a central cause of the crisis, with impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance at the federal and state levels as well as hefty, illicit fees that limit reach and increase delivery costs.

In conclusion Mr President, what we are witnessing in all of these countries is the return of hunger as a weapon of war.

The destruction of farms, livestock herds and markets; the blocks on humanitarian aid and access for commercial goods; these are all deliberate tactics to decrease people's access to adequate nutrition and healthcare.

We need to recognise that this is happening as a result of political decisions. So in turn, this Council must bring our own political pressure to bear on those responsible and hold them to account.

We have the power and duty to influence their behaviour in the right direction. It is time to say “enough is enough.”

Thank you.

Press release: Veterans’ charities reminded to prioritise safeguarding

The charity regulator is [writing to recently registered veterans’ charities](#), reminding them to ensure they are safeguarding people in their care.

This follows a proactive [review of a sample of military charities](#) that were registered since 2007 and are involved in service delivery to veterans and / or in public fundraising.

The review found the charities were providing a wide range of services and activities that had a positive impact on the lives of veterans. It also found areas of good practice, including around trustees working together to make decisions in the best interests of their charity.

However, the Commission also found a concerning lack of safeguarding policies and practices in some of the charities reviewed. In a number of other cases, it found that the charities needed to strengthen their safeguarding policies.

The Commission says that this resulted in part from not recognising the veterans they help as being potentially vulnerable on account of their personal circumstances. The potential vulnerabilities of former service men and women with physical injuries were more likely to be considered than those with other conditions, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The issues included not considering whether those who were in direct contact with veterans should undergo appropriate background checks (DBS checks).

The review also found weaknesses in most of the charities’ oversight of fundraising, with some having no basic agreement in place with professional fundraisers, and some having no systems to ensure the charity receives all of the funds raised by professional fundraisers.

The Commission was prompted to conduct a proactive review after identifying from its case work, social media, and media reporting that some more recently registered military charities may be at greater risk of compliance and reputational issues. The regulator wanted to establish whether there were any themes or patterns of concern in this type of charity.

As a result of the Commission's findings, it is now working collaboratively through [Cobseo, the Confederation of Service Charities](#), and writing to veterans' charities registered since 2007, to remind them to:

- be alert to the specific needs and potential vulnerabilities of some of their beneficiaries
- put robust safeguarding policies in place and ensure they are followed in practice
- ensure they have proper arrangements in place with any professional fundraisers or commercial firms providing fundraising services

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission, said:

The charities we examined had been set up with good intentions by people with genuine compassion for veterans. And we saw some really innovative work being done in those charities.

But it takes more than good intentions and a good idea to run a charity properly. The trustees' role is to govern a charity well. And one of their most basic duties is to take safeguarding seriously. Some veterans may be potentially vulnerable for a variety of reasons because of what they've seen and been through, and charities set up to help them must make caring for them, and protecting them, an absolute priority. The public would be rightly concerned if veterans were exposed to harm through a charity supposed to help them.

Charities working with veterans rely on public generosity, and our advice to the public is simple: give with your head as well as your heart. Ask some basic questions before you give: how much of my pound will reach the beneficiaries? Are you giving direct to the charity or is a fundraising company taking a cut? There is no right or wrong charity to support – but we can all take basic steps to ensure our donations are making a difference.

And if you see something you're not comfortable with, for example aggressive or disrespectful fundraising, report it to the Fundraising Regulator, which is the self-regulatory body for fundraising.

And my message to those thinking of setting up new military charity is to think carefully before doing so; there are other ways of supporting the armed forces community, including supporting with money or time an existing, established veterans charity. Setting up a new charity may not be the most effective way to help.

General Sir John McColl, KCB, CBE, DSO, Executive Chairman of Cobseo, The Confederation of Service Charities said:

We strongly support the Charity Commission's scrutiny of safeguarding and fundraising practices, not just for the Military Charities on its register, but across the entire charitable sector.

Service charities play a crucial, and highly effective, role in supporting the Armed Forces Community. Cobseo, The Confederation of Service Charities, strives for the highest of standards among its membership and will continue to work closely with the Charity Commission in pursuit of this goal.

Wider case work involving veterans charities

Since 2016, the Commission has opened 17 compliance cases into military charities resulting from complaints or concerns raised in the media; of these 13 have concluded. The Commission has also announced 5 statutory inquiries into charities working with veterans ([The Veterans Charity](#), [Support the Heroes](#), [Afghan Heroes](#), [1st Knight Military Charity](#), [Our Local Heroes](#)).

The Commission says that these cases indicate that some recently registered veterans' charities can be vulnerable to problems resulting from inappropriate dominance of one or two individuals; often excessive power rests with a charity's founder, who is not properly challenged by other trustees. This can lead to poor decision making and to concerns such as conflicts of interest and unauthorised private benefit.

The findings of the review, and of its reactive case work involving veterans' charities, have also prompted the Commission to strengthen its approach to assessing applications for new veterans' charities, and undertake a wider tranche of further proactive case work among military charities registered since 2007.

Ends

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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. Our review examined 21 charities, chosen from military charities registered since 2007 that provide services to veterans and /or are involved in public fundraising.
3. While the number of new military charities registering increased following Britain's involvement in conflicts in Afghanistan, overall the number of military charities coming off the register has outstripped new registrations by 2 to 1 and the number of registered charities has shrunk by around 10% over the last decade.
4. [The Fundraising Regulator](#) holds the Code of Fundraising Practice for the UK; it sets and maintains standards for charitable fundraising, aims to ensure that fundraising is respectful, open, honest and accountable to the public and regulates fundraising in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Speech: "Today we are all witnessing Haiti turn a corner. Days of violence and instability have begun to fade. The ultimate thanks go to the people of Haiti"

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you Special Representative Honoré for your briefing. As MINUSTAH draws to a close after 13 years in Haiti, I would like to start by thanking you for your dedicated service. I also want to pay tribute to all who have been involved with the mission and its work; the civilian staff, troops and police who have served, and, in particular, the 186 men and women who died in MINUSTAH's service.

MINUSTAH's legacy is clear when we compare the Haiti of today to the Haiti of 2004. There is less violence. The security environment is more stable. The Haitian National Police are more effective. And a more democratic political culture has emerged, accompanied by transitions of power.

Of course, we cannot be complacent. The gains made must be protected. MINUJUSTH represents a transitional stage for the UN's future support for Haiti. The Haiti of today still needs help to ensure its police can soon stand alone, that justice institutions can soon function effectively, and that human rights are afforded the protection and priority they require.

While we note that the Status of Forces agreement has not yet been signed – and we urge the government to do so as soon as possible – we welcome that the

transition to MINUJUSTH is on track. We must ensure the mission has access to the most appropriate personnel and equipment and that this is underpinned by high quality training, skilled and robust leadership, and with clear accountability for underperformance and misconduct.

If the UN is to maximise the impact of its support to Haiti, MINUJUSTH must work closely with the UN Country Team, which has a critical role to play in sustaining peace. For example, through its support for the 2030 Agenda, the UN Country Team will be able to bring a long-term developmental focus to the major challenges Haiti faces today. Joint planning, analysis and capacity mapping exercises will be needed from day one so that responsibilities are handed over sequentially well ahead of MINUJUSTH's closure.

Indeed, Haiti does not need an indefinite peacekeeping operation. The planned exit strategy to guide a two year transition from MINUJUSTH to the UN Country Team – and also, critically, Haiti's own national institutions – marks an opportunity for the UN to set precedents for peacekeeping missions around the world.

We regret that the good work of MINUSTAH was tainted by the spectre of cholera and sexual exploitation and abuse. Here too there are lessons to be learned. The new approach to cholera has helped to put Haiti on a path towards eradication but this came too long after the damage had been done. As for sexual exploitation at the hands of peacekeepers, the tragic experience of Haiti demonstrates why we cannot abide any backsliding on the commitments made through Resolution 2272.

Mr President,

There is much that the UN can do better. But the single most important guarantor of the progress achieved in Haiti lies within its own leadership. The gap left by MINUSTAH is not primarily for MINUJUSTH to plug, but for Haiti's government, politicians and institutions to begin to fill.

For example, security cannot be achieved unless the government protects the independence of Haiti's police and gives them the resources they need – rather than diverting money on the creation of new armed forces. Justice cannot be delivered until parliamentarians pass legislation critical to empowering the judiciary. Human rights cannot be protected without proper institutionalisation within the state. And pronouncements of progress will continue to ring hollow until we see more women empowered as political leaders – and fewer becoming victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion Mr. President, today we are all witnessing Haiti turn a corner. Days of violence and instability have begun to fade. The ultimate thanks go to the people of Haiti. Without question, they have displayed remarkable resilience. But the courageous efforts of MINUSTAH have also played their part. We salute their successes and look forward to the UN's continued assistance to the Haitian people.

Thank you.

News story: Regulatory alert for military charities

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, is issuing this alert to recently registered charities that, according to their objects and/or name, support veterans. It reminds trustees of the importance of:

- ensuring they are safeguarding people in their care
- complying with their legal trustee duties when carrying out and overseeing their charity's fundraising.

This alert follows a proactive review of a sample of military charities that were registered since 2007 and are involved in service delivery to veterans and / or in public fundraising.

The review found the charities were providing a wide range of services and activities that were appreciated by and had a positive impact on the lives of veterans. We also identified areas of good practice, including examples of effective collaborative working to provide better services to beneficiaries, and trustees working together to make decisions in the best interests of their charity.

However, the Commission also found a concerning lack of safeguarding policies and practices in some of the charities reviewed. In a number of other cases, it found that the charities needed to strengthen their safeguarding policies. The review also found weaknesses in most of the charities' oversight of fundraising, with some having no basic agreement in place with professional fundraisers, and some having no systems to ensure the charity receives all of the funds raised by professional fundraisers.

The Commission is reminding trustees of charities providing services to veterans that they must:

- take the necessary steps to safeguard their beneficiaries and all reasonable steps to prevent harm to them; this means assessing their vulnerability and ensuring that appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place;
- be alert to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of their beneficiaries. This includes identifying and dealing with safeguarding responsibilities connected with mental as well as physical health. Even

if they are not focused on helping vulnerable veterans specifically, all charities supporting veterans need to be alert to the potential for some of their service users to have experienced events or situations making them potentially vulnerable, and should have appropriate procedures in place.

The Commission is reminding trustees of charities that fundraise from the public that they must:

- comply with specific legal requirements which apply when a third party fundraiser meets the definition of a [professional fundraiser](#) or [corporate partnerships](#). These rules promote transparency, protect potential donors, and give them a fair indication of the extent to which the charity (or charities) will benefit from the fundraising;
- ensure they have effective systems in place to keep control of the fundraising to properly protect the charity's interests, assets and reputation – the Commission's guidance [Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties \(CC20\)](#) sets out what trustees need to consider; our [checklist for trustees](#) allows you to assess how well they are doing and to identify areas they need to strengthen.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission, said:

The charities we examined had been set up with good intentions by people with genuine compassion for veterans. And we saw some really innovative work being done in those charities.

But it takes more than good intentions and a good idea to run a charity properly. The trustees' role is to govern a charity well. And one of their most basic duties is to take safeguarding seriously. Some veterans may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons because of what they've seen and been through, and charities set up to help them must make caring for them, and protecting them, an absolute priority. The public would be rightly concerned if vulnerable veterans were exposed to harm through a charity supposed to help them.

Help and guidance

There is more information about safeguarding beneficiaries in the Commission's guidance [Charities: How to protect vulnerable groups including children](#).

There is more information about the legal requirements that apply to arrangements with a professional fundraiser or commercial participator, and

trustees' general duties with regard to fundraising, in the Commission's guidance [Charity fundraising: a guide to trustee duties \(CC20\)](#). The Commission has also published a [checklist](#) designed to help trustees evaluate their charity's performance against the legal requirements and good practice recommendations set out in above guidance.

You can also view the information and advice provided by the (Fundraising Regulator)[<http://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk>] on its website, including information about the new requirements for contracts between charities and third party fundraising organisations which came into force on 1 November 2016.

The [Institute of Fundraising](#) also has advice and information on its website, including a [guide on working with fundraising agencies](#).

Our guidance [about decision making](#) sets out the principles that charity trustees should follow to make sound decisions and fulfil their legal responsibilities.