

Press release: End to Metro Bank "no DSS" mortgages

Latest pledge from industry to end potentially discriminatory practices which deny good quality accommodation to those on benefits.

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Thousands of families could benefit from changes to mortgage rules announced by Metro Bank today which currently prevent landlords renting to tenants on housing support, following a roundtable at Downing Street led by Housing Minister Heather Wheeler MP.

Today's announcement (11 June 2019) is the latest pledge from industry to end potentially discriminatory practices which deny good quality accommodation to those on benefits – such as 'No DSS' adverts – and follows similar moves in recent weeks from big names such as Rightmove and Zoopla.

As part of the government's work against the stigma experienced by tenants on benefits, Minister for Housing and Homelessness Heather Wheeler MP met with leading industry bodies and companies at Downing Street today to work on a solution.

Whilst the vast majority of the private rental sector provide a fair and professional service, the government has been clear that 'No DSS' has no place in a modern housing market and is determined to introduce a blanket ban on this practice.

Leading companies in the industry, including Rightmove and Zoopla joined Metro Bank and government at the event, coming together to improve access to the private rented sector.

Minister for Housing and Homelessness Heather Wheeler MP said:

Regardless of financial circumstances, everyone should have the same opportunity when looking for a home and I have been determined to end the discrimination those on benefits face.

Today's meeting was yet another step forward; marking an important shift in making the private rented sector fairer for all – and I am thrilled that Metro Bank have decided to join us in ending the

stigma surrounding tenants on housing benefit.

I am grateful to those companies for taking the time to discuss this issue, and look forward to us continuing to work together.

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance, Will Quince said:

We are working to bring the sector together to tackle this issue, ensuring everyone has the same opportunity to access safe and secure housing.

It's encouraging that we're already seeing positive changes being made in the industry, and we continue to encourage landlords and agents to consider tenants on an individual basis.

Press release: Green light for investment in electric car battery development

- Government invests £23 million to keep the UK at the forefront of electric car development
- Companies benefiting from this government investment will use it in the development of the latest battery technologies
- Part of the modern Industrial Strategy's Future of Mobility Grand Challenge

Companies across the country are set to benefit from £23 million government investment to help them keep the UK at the forefront of developing the latest electric vehicle technology.

Businesses ranging from small designers to major car manufacturers are among the winners of the government's Faraday Battery Challenge announced by Business Secretary Greg Clark.

It forms part of the government's drive to maintain the UK as a world-leader in the latest technologies and emerging markets, through its modern Industrial Strategy.

The Faraday Battery Challenge brings together world-leading academia and businesses to accelerate the research needed to develop the latest electric car battery technologies – a crucial part of the UK's move towards a net zero emissions economy.

It is also a key contributor to all new cars and vans being effectively zero emission by 2040.

Winners include:

- Mining consultancy firm Wardell Armstrong who will work with experts at the Natural History Museum and mining firm Cornish Lithium to lead a new study looking to develop a UK supply of lithium, helping to meet the massive demand expected from the transition to electric vehicles
- A Jaguar Land Rover-led project to maximise battery performance while maintaining safety
- A study looking into the use of artificial intelligence in battery manufacture, led by materials technology company Granta Design.

Business and Energy Secretary, Greg Clark said:

We are committed to ensuring our world-leading automotive sector can flourish. These exciting new projects will build on the UK's reputation for excellence, our rich heritage in the auto industry and pave the way for advances towards a cleaner economy.

We will continue to invest in future car manufacturing, batteries and electrification infrastructure through our modern Industrial Strategy and today's winners will be crucial in ensuring that the UK leads the world in the global transition to a low carbon economy – one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time.

Today's £23 million investment forms part of the total £274 million that will be awarded to consortia across the UK through the Faraday Battery Challenge, part of the government's [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) (ISCF).

Faraday Battery Challenge Director Tony Harper said:

Across the three rounds of funding competitions we have now awarded a total of £82.6 million to 63 projects.

This is a massive investment in business-led battery R&D in the UK, supporting innovative technologies and helping to build a UK supply chain that can compete on the global stage".

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport, said:

The Faraday Battery Challenge brings together the UK's world-class expertise across research and industry to deliver battery technologies that will power the vehicles of the future.

The projects announced today emphasise how this collective expertise is being brought to bear on the biggest challenges facing the development of next-generation electric car batteries, from

their power source and performance to safety and manufacturing.

Notes to editors

- Other projects that were granted funding [are listed](#).
- The ISCF is delivered by [UK Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI). UKRI is a new body which works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish.
- The [Faraday Battery Challenge](#) is a £274 million government investment into battery technology through the Industrial Strategy. It will develop safe, cost effective, durable, lighter weight, higher performing and recyclable batteries in the UK which will power the next generation of electric vehicles.
- As a key part of the UK government's modern Industrial Strategy, the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge was announced in 2017 to encourage and support extraordinary innovation in UK engineering and technology, making the UK a world leader within the transport industries.
- This includes facilitating profound changes in transport technologies and business models, to make the movement of people, goods and services across the nation greener, safer, easier and more reliable.

[Press release: Green light for investment in electric car battery development](#)

Government announces £23 million of funding for businesses large and small to develop the latest technology for electric car batteries.

[Press release: Charity Commission reports on inquiry into Oxfam GB: "No charity is more important than the people it serves or the mission it](#)

pursues”

Charity Commission publishes critical report on Oxfam GB, finding that aspects of the charity’s past record on safeguarding amount to mismanagement, and takes regulatory action.

Charities are being warned that no charity is more important than the people it serves or the mission it pursues, and that all are judged on their actions, not their words.

It comes as the [regulator publishes a critical report on Oxfam GB](#), and finds that the charity repeatedly fell below standards expected, had a culture of tolerating poor behaviour, and concludes that it failed to meet promises made on safeguarding, ultimately letting everyone down.

The inquiry finds the charity failed to heed warnings, including from its own staff, that its culture and response around keeping people safe was inadequate, and made commitments to safeguarding that were not matched by its actions.

The report, which takes into account over 7,000 items of evidence, examines the charity’s handling of events in Haiti, and separately its more recent record on protecting people, including its beneficiaries, volunteers and staff, from harm.

It concludes that some of the charity’s failings and shortcomings amount to mismanagement, and the Commission has used its powers to issue Oxfam GB with an Official Warning, and Directions under Section 84 of the Charities Act 2011.

“Missed opportunities and a flawed response” – Oxfam GB and Haiti 2011

The regulator finds that the then executive of Oxfam GB mishandled aspects of its response to allegations of misconduct in Haiti in 2011.

Overall, the Commission concludes that there had been a “culture of poor behaviour” and poor accountability among staff in Haiti at the time, of which individuals took advantage.

The Commission also finds that the charity’s reports to donors and the Commission itself were “not as full and frank about the nature and seriousness of the incidents and problems in Haiti as they should have been”. The inquiry’s view is that Oxfam GB’s approach to disclosure and reporting was marked, at times, by a desire to protect the charity’s reputation and donor relationships.

Specifically, the inquiry found that the charity:

- did not adequately follow-up whether victims of sexual misconduct in

Haiti were minors

- did not report allegations of child abuse by Oxfam GB staff in Haiti, failing to take the risks to alleged victims seriously enough
- dealt with staff members implicated in sexual misconduct in Haiti inconsistently, notably by appearing to treat senior staff more leniently than junior staff
- missed opportunities to identify and tackle early warnings before the events in Haiti in 2011

“Repeatedly failed to meet promises made”– Oxfam GB’s wider record on safeguarding

The inquiry also examined Oxfam GB’s wider approach to safeguarding, historically, and more recently, and concluded that the charity’s own commitments and promises in the past were not always matched by its actions.

It says this results from its leadership, up to 2018, applying insufficient resources to keeping people safe from harm, and concludes that this and other systemic weaknesses amount to mismanagement in the administration of charity.

The inquiry also finds the charity missed opportunities to address issues raised by its own safeguarding staff, and exposed the charity to undue risk.

Specifically, the inquiry finds that:

- resourcing and capability around safeguarding at the charity between 2015 to 2017 did not match the risks associated with the charity’s global reach and the nature of its work
- the charity’s approach to safeguarding case work was at times unstructured and a lack of adequate assurance and oversight mechanisms meant trustees were unable to identify serious failures in case handling, including poor record keeping, failings of which the inquiry is “extremely critical”
- weaknesses in the charity’s HR practices prior to 2018, particularly concerning problems around vetting and referencing and management oversight, led to a ‘culture of tolerance of poor behaviour’
- as late as 2017, promises that the resources for safeguarding would be increased were not delivered

Helen Stephenson, Chief Executive of the Charity Commission, said the regulator’s findings demonstrate that the incidents in Haiti were symptoms of a wider problem:

What went wrong in Haiti did not happen in isolation. Our inquiry demonstrates that, over a period of years, Oxfam’s internal culture tolerated poor behaviour, and at times lost sight of the values it stands for.

The charity’s leadership may have been well-intentioned. But our report demonstrates that good intentions have limited value when they are not matched with resources, robust systems and processes

that are implemented on the ground, and more importantly, an organisational culture that prioritises keeping people safe.

I would like to thank the whistleblowers in this case, who took the courageous decision to come to us with their concerns. Their contribution has made, and will continue to make, an important difference.

She added that there is continued hard work ahead for Oxfam GB:

The charity's new leadership has acknowledged past mistakes and committed publicly to learning the lessons.

But significant further cultural and systemic change is required to address the failings and weaknesses our report identifies. And so the conclusion of our inquiry marks the beginning, not the end of the process of change for Oxfam GB. Its leadership has hard work ahead of it. We will be watching their progress closely in the weeks and months ahead.

In a foreword to the report, Baroness Stowell, Chair of the Charity Commission, says no charity is more important than the mission it pursues or the people it serves:

No charity is so large, nor is its mission so important that it can afford to put its own reputation ahead of the dignity and wellbeing of those it exists to protect. But the implications of this inquiry are not confined to the failings of a single, big charity, because no charity is too small to bear its own share of responsibility for upholding the wider good name of charity.

Ultimately being a charity is more than just about what you do, it is also about the way in which you do it. The Charity Commission is determined to reassure the public that it understands this fundamental point and will work with the sector it regulates to demonstrate that fact in the months and years ahead.

Regulatory action and next steps

On 7 June 2019, the Commission exercised its legal powers and issued an official warning under section 75A of the Charities Act 2011 on the grounds there has been some areas of mismanagement in relation to Haiti and its safeguarding governance prior to 2018.

The action will give the public assurance the charity was being held to account for past failings, corporately and collectively and also assist in giving confidence to current and potential donors and funders that there has been sanction for previous failings where the charity has fallen short on

safeguarding.

The inquiry concludes that the charity, through its leadership, has made significant progress in improving weaknesses in its safeguarding, but makes clear that “significant further cultural and systemic change” is required to address fully the failings and weaknesses identified.

Therefore, on 10 June 2019, the Commission exercised additional legal powers and issued Oxfam GB with a regulatory Direction under Section 84 of the Charities Act 2011. The order directed the trustees to take specified actions including to submit an action plan for the Commission’s approval by 30 June 2019, which will set out the steps by which it will implement the outstanding actions and recommendations required by the Commission. The direction will provide the regulator assurance that the charity will implement the outstanding actions necessary.

In closing the inquiry the Commission provided general regulatory advice and guidance under Section 15(2) of the Act in relation to trustee duties on safeguarding and trustee duties.

Background to the inquiry

The Commission’s statutory inquiry into Oxfam GB opened in February 2018, after the regulator examined documents shared by the charity regarding allegations of misconduct by staff involved in its humanitarian response in Haiti.

The Commission was, at that time, already engaged with Oxfam GB on safeguarding matters, and in November 2017 had issued the charity with an action plan setting out a range of actions the charity was required to undertake, including an externally led review of its HR culture, and a review of the organisation’s structures, management reporting lines, and resourcing.

Notes to editors:

1. The Commission’s investigation opened in February 2018, to examine the charity’s governance, including leadership and culture around safeguarding matters, and its management, policies and practices. The inquiry consisted of two parts; the first examined the charity’s handling in 2011 of the complaints about its staff in Haiti; the second part examined Oxfam GB’s wider approach to safeguarding, historically, and currently, which included supervising an independent review around safeguarding in the charity.

Ends.