

Regulator oversees governance improvements after senior figures in development charity post anti-Semitic and offensive social media comments

Press release

The Charity Commission has concluded a compliance case involving Islamic Relief Worldwide after serious concerns were identified about historic anti-Semitic posts made by one of the charity's then trustees last year.



During the course of the case, another then trustee and a now former executive director were also found to have posted similarly offensive and anti-Semitic social media comments some time previously, which ran contrary to the charity's code of conduct and fell far below the standard the public expect of charity trustees and staff. All three individuals have themselves acknowledged that their conduct was unacceptable and have issued apologies. All parties have cooperated fully with the Commission.

The Commission reviewed the charity's response to these comments and is satisfied that it took swift action, including to condemn the comments and ensure all three individuals left their roles, which the individuals did of their own accord. None has any ongoing involvement with the charity.

The Commission has overseen significant improvements to the recruitment and oversight of trustees and senior staff at the charity. During the compliance case the charity held pre-planned trustee elections and recruited a new board. The Commission has met with the new board and is satisfied that it is making the necessary improvements in terms of the vetting of trustees, and ongoing oversight over their social media activities. The charity has also appointed an Independent Commission to review its wider governance.

The Commission's case established that the former trustees and director did not disclose the existence of their social media profiles or posts to the charity. The Commission is considering the reasons and circumstances

surrounding this and whether further regulatory action is appropriate.

The regulatory case concluded in January 2021 with the issuing to the trustees of regulatory advice under s15(2) of the Charities Act 2011, requiring them to take further action in a number of areas, including to review and if necessary update the charity's code of conduct for trustees. The Commission will review progress against those requirements as part of its regular monitoring work.

Tim Hopkins, Assistant Director of Investigations and Inquiries at the Charity Commission, said:

The posts made by a number of now former senior leaders within Islamic Relief Worldwide on social media were clearly offensive, and risked damaging public trust in Islamic Relief Worldwide and charities more generally.

There is no place for anti-Semitism or any other form of racism in charity, which is a precious national asset, that we must work together to protect and promote. We welcome the improvements the charity has made to its governance so far and will continue to monitor its progress.

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The Commission's compliance case began in July 2020.
3. In September 2020, Islamic Relief Worldwide confirmed the appointment of Dominic Grieve QC to chair an [independent commission into the charity's approach to trustee vetting and conduct](#).

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